

Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey: 2020 Summary

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ABSTRACT The Iowa Department of Natural Resources conducts nocturnal spotlight surveys from mid-March to mid-May, annually. The survey was initiated in 1978 to provide population indices for raccoon and white-tailed deer in Iowa. In 2006, the survey was redesigned to provide a systematic statewide sample of land cover types available to wildlife and to produce standardized population trends for several additional species. The objectives of the survey are 1) to produce annual counts for deer, raccoon, and select furbearer species as independent population indices or as supplements to other survey data and 2) to monitor the distribution and relative abundance of select species for population management and conservation efforts. Spotlight surveys are conducted in all 99 Iowa counties and total ~4,790 mi (\bar{x} = ~50 mi/county) of surveyed rural roads. In 2020, a total of 21,585 observations were recorded, with deer (n = 16,466), raccoon (n = 4,454), opossum (n = 179), striped skunk (n = 173), and house cat (n = 161) being the most frequent species observed. Observations for deer, raccoon, skunk, and badger were relatively stable, whereas observations decreased for red fox and increased for opossum.

INTRODUCTION

Data capable of estimating wildlife abundance are often difficult, expensive, and time consuming to collect, particularly for rare or elusive species, or species that exist across large geographic areas. Standardized sampling methods, however, may provide consistent indices of populations over time. Reliable indices are important for understanding population trends and the factors affecting populations, including environmental conditions (Progulske and Duerre 1964, Fujisaki et al. 2011), regulated harvest (Carrillo et al. 2000), and disease (Gehrt et al. 2006). One common method, the nocturnal spotlight survey, has been used since the mid-20th Century and provides wildlife managers a cost-effective and easily implemented option to sample wildlife populations (SDDGFP 1950; Anderson 1959). Spotlight counts have been used to produce indices for species such as opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*; Gehrt et al. 2006), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*; Gehrt et al. 2002), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*; Ruethe et al. 2003), and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*; Rybarczyk 1978, Kaminski et al. 2019).

In 1978, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR; formerly the Iowa Conservation Commission) initiated the Spring Spotlight Survey because of concerns that all-time high raccoon pelt prices threatened an over-harvest and would negatively impact the sustainability of the population (Rybarczyk 1978). Spotlight routes were established along forested areas to survey for raccoon, although white-tailed deer were also included. In general, from 1978–1990, 85 spotlight routes were surveyed across the state, and from 1991–1995, 5 additional routes were added (Appendix A). Because forest cover may structure raccoon (Pedler et al. 1997, Beasley et al. 2007) and deer (Volk et al. 2007, Walter et al. 2009) populations in agricultural landscapes, statewide population counts using these data may be biased (McShea et al. 2011). Regardless, the trends resulting from this survey provided key insight into these growing populations since the 1970s (Appendix B–E).

In 2006, a new survey was developed to address deficiencies in the original design. Rather than using survey routes perpendicular to forest cover, routes were oriented longitudinally in an east–west direction to achieve a representative sample of the land cover types across the state. Several species were added to the survey, including badger (*Taxidea taxus*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), gray (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) and red fox, mink (*Mustela vison*), opossum, river otter (*Lontra canadensis*), striped (*Mephitis mephitis*) and spotted skunk (*Spilogale putorius*), weasels (*Mustela* sp.), white-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus townsendii*), and woodchuck (*Marmota monax*). The new methodology was tested concurrently with the original survey and found to result in similar trends with less variability (Iowa DNR, unpublished data). Therefore, in 2012, the new survey routes were adopted in all 99 Iowa counties. The new survey design results in relatively large counts for deer, raccoon, opossum, striped skunk, coyote, and red fox. Observations for other species (e.g., gray fox, bobcat, river otter, mink), however, are more variable because of the secretive nature, low density, or low visibility for

animals. Thus, a low count for these species does not necessarily imply low population abundance.

The goal of the Spring Spotlight Survey is to collect reliable, standardized, and long-term counts for select wildlife species that can be used to inform science-based management decisions in Iowa. The objectives of the survey are 1) to collect systematic observations for deer, raccoon, and select furbearer species as independent indices for populations or as supplements to harvest and other survey data collected by the Iowa DNR and 2) to monitor the long-term distribution and relative abundance of select wildlife species for population management and conservation efforts.

STUDY AREA

The Spring Spotlight Survey is conducted in each of 99 counties in the 56,239-mi² state of Iowa (Fig. 1). The climate is humid continental, characterized by hot, humid summers and cold winters. Average annual precipitation ranges from 24.4 inches in the northwest to 37.2 inches in the southeast (NOAA 2002a). Average annual temperatures ranges from 45.5° F in the northwest to 50.7° F in the southeast (NOAA 2002b). Land cover consists of agriculture (63%), grass and pastureland (22%), forest (10%), urban and other developed lands (2%), and wetlands, shallow lakes, and open water (2%; IA DNR 2015).

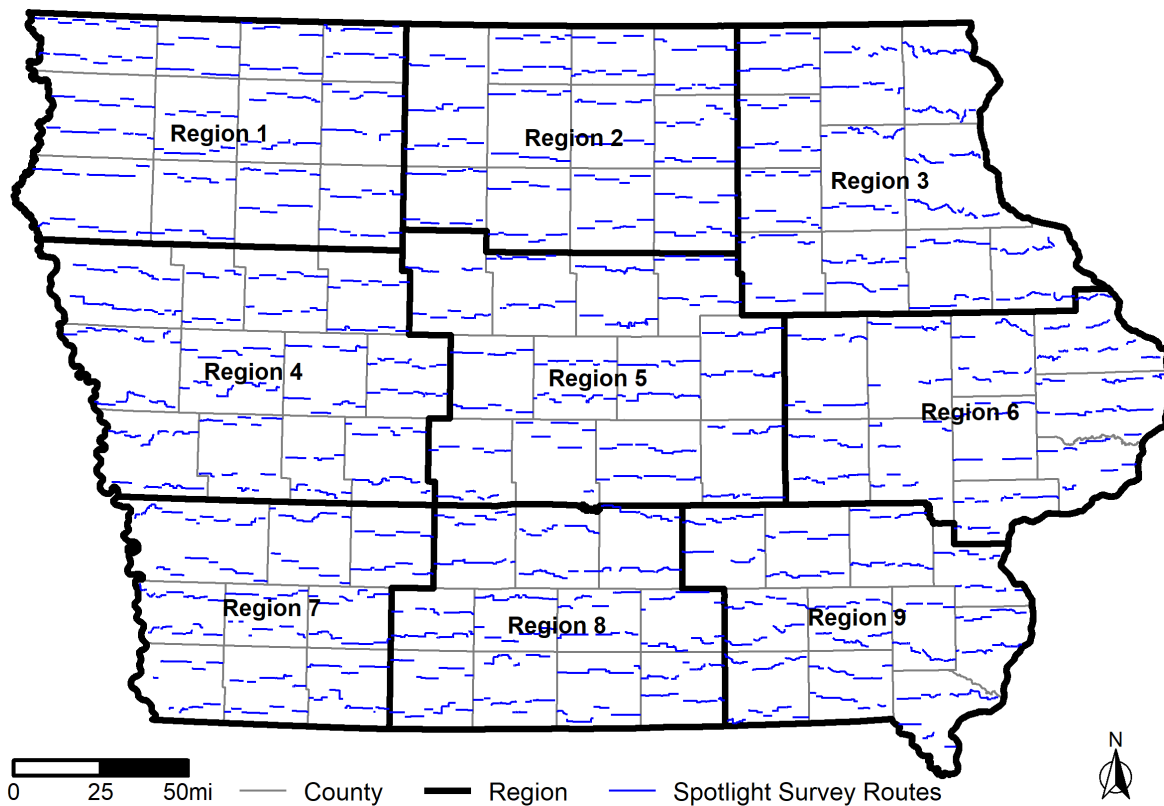


Figure 1. Spring Spotlight Survey routes ($n = 199$) in each county of Iowa and 9 regions of the state used for summarizing spotlight count data.

Table 1. Survey year, number of miles surveyed, and total number of animals observed for select species during the Spring Spotlight Survey in Iowa, 2006-present.

Year	Miles	Deer	Badger	Bobcat	Coyote	Mink	Opossum	Raccoon	Red fox	Skunk	House cat
2006 ^a	4,293	9,279	9	4	56	9	136	2,417	41	133	15
2007	4,795	11,284	23	2	49	6	164	2,812	32	143	383
2008	4,793	13,329	22	5	51	13	118	3,143	46	148	511
2009	4,784	12,935	15	4	66	11	136	3,219	32	174	405
2010	4,787	10,888	16	4	53	10	86	3,621	43	217	392
2011	4,780	11,054	9	4	64	6	85	4,197	55	211	490
2012	4,788	9,324	9	3	92	11	114	3,282	37	171	599
2013	4,785	13,069	15	2	94	6	172	3,349	42	140	479
2014	4,800	11,401	12	3	65	3	88	3,791	28	116	391
2015	4,790	12,354	12	2	71	1	165	3,569	29	157	338
2016	4,799	12,522	16	1	110	13	273	3,672	27	144	252
2017	4,793	13,017	16	4	108	5	297	3,695	38	138	200
2018	4,790	15,102	18	0	99	2	295	4,683	46	181	209
2019	4,772	16,490	28	4	89	11	154	5,390	58	194	230
2020	4,781	15,953	26	8	86	8	179	4,454	24	173	161

^aIn 2006, species other than white-tailed deer and northern raccoon, particularly house cat, were not recorded in all counties and species counts may not be comparable to subsequent years.

METHODS

The Spring Spotlight Survey is conducted each year, usually after snow-melt and before spring green-up occurs, between mid-March and mid-May with the date of surveys dependent on local weather conditions and the latitudinal timing of vegetation leaf-out across the state. Surveys are standardized according to weather conditions (Rybarczyk 1978) and conducted during periods of no precipitation, wind speed <15 mph, relative humidity ≥40%, and temperature >32° F. Surveys consist of 2 east–west driving routes, one across each of the northern and southern halves of counties (except Kossuth County which has 3 routes; $n = 199$). Routes consist of rural unpaved roads totaling ~4,790 mi statewide ($\bar{x} = 24.1$ mi/route, 12.4–45.1 mi; $SD = 4.3$ mi) and are sampled once each spring. Surveys begin 1 hour after sunset and are conducted at speeds ≤20 mi/hr. Surveys are conducted by 2 observers (1 driver and 1 passenger), both of whom search for wildlife using a spotlight along their respective side of the road. From 2006–2018, the number and location of animals was recorded at the observer location using a Global Positioning System (GPS) device. For deer, the distance and bearing to each group of deer (≥1 individual) were also recorded for estimating deer density across the state. Beginning in 2019, observations were recorded digitally (e.g., smart phones, tablets) in a geospatial database (ArcCollector; Environmental Systems Research Institute, Redlands, CA) which allowed for collection of more precise wildlife locations and increased survey efficiency.

We summarized long-term trends for spotlight counts across 9 regions of Iowa (Fig. 1) and statewide for species with typically ≥5 observations recorded per year. We standardized counts as the number of animals observed per 100 miles surveyed to account for annual differences in the number of miles surveyed (e.g., road closures). Because animal counts may vary annually, we further estimated the 5-year average relative distribution of counts to contextualize annual observations with recent trends and to map the relative distribution of species across the state. We interpolated the average distribution of counts for the most recent 5 years using inverse distance weighting (IDW; function `gstat` in Program R 3.6.1; R Core Team 2019) and 9 nearest neighbors. To determine the IDW power used to weight nearest neighbors for each species, we iteratively tested power values from 0.2–5.0 in 0.2 increments and estimated the root mean square error (RMSE) for each IDW estimate. We selected the power value from the IDW estimate with the lowest RMSE for producing the final IDW map. We further averaged the final IDW map using a focal analysis (function `focal` in Program R) and a 29.8-mi moving window to produce a smoother and more readily interpretable trend surface across Iowa.

RESULTS

In 2020, 4,781 mi of rural roads were surveyed across all 99 Iowa counties. In total, 21,585 animal observations were recorded, with deer, raccoons, opossums, and skunks being the most frequent species observed (Table 1; Fig. 2–39). No observations of jackrabbit, otter, or weasel were recorded.

The number of deer observed statewide was similar to 2019. Previously, the long-term trend was relatively stable, although since 2014, deer counts have gradually increased (Fig. 2). Deer were observed at a rate of 3.4 deer/mi statewide (same as 2019), with the highest counts in the south-central, SW, and NE regions (Fig. 4). Deer counts have remained relatively stable across most regions, except the south- and north-central regions where counts have increased during the past 10 years, and the SE region which recorded an increase in 2020 compared with past years.

The number of raccoons observed declined slightly in 2020, although remained above the long-term average ($\bar{x} = 3,686$; Fig. 24). All regions of the state recorded decreased observations compared with 2019, except the SW region which recorded increased counts similar to 2018 (Fig. 26).

Observations for bobcat reached an all-time high in 2020 ($n = 8$; Fig. 11), although counts are generally low for the species. Opossum observations increased in 2020 and the statewide count was similar to their long-term average ($\bar{x} = 164$; Fig. 20). Badger observations were similar to 2019 and remained above their long-term average ($\bar{x} = 16$; Fig. 7). Skunk observations declined slightly in 2020 (Fig. 32), although were similar to the past 2 years. Coyote observations declined in 2020 which continued a 5-year decline in the number counted (Fig. 13). Mink observations also declined, however, counts have regularly fluctuated during the past 15 years (Fig. 17). Most notably, red fox observations declined 58% following an all-time high count in 2019 (Fig. 28). The 2020 count represents the lowest number of red fox observed since 2006, when the species was added to the survey.

DISCUSSION

The number of deer observed statewide in 2020 declined 3% compared with 2019. During the summer of 2019, an outbreak of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) resulted in a relatively high number of reported deer mortalities in south-central Iowa. Epizootic hemorrhagic disease is a naturally occurring viral disease that is transmitted to deer by biting midges, particularly during drought years, and causes fever, dehydration, and occasionally death. The occurrence of EHD likely reduced the fall deer population and resulted in decreased encounters with deer by hunters (Harms et al. 2019) and reduced harvest in the region in 2019 (18,998 harvested deer reported; 19% decline from 2018). However, spotlight counts indicated that the effects of EHD on the spring population was marginal compared with the observed declines in the previous fall. The spring spotlight count in south-central Iowa ($n = 3,935$ deer) was only 8% lower than in 2019 ($n = 4,281$) and 11% above the previous 5-year average ($\bar{x} = 3,531$). In Warren County, which had the most EHD-related deer mortalities reported (773 deer) and a 31% decline in reported harvest, the 2020 spotlight count ($n = 437$) increased 60% compared with 2019 ($n = 273$). In Madison County, which had the second most reported mortalities (160 deer), the 2020 spotlight count ($n = 546$) was similar to the previous 5-year average ($\bar{x} = 590$) and 20% higher than the long-term average ($\bar{x} = 438$). Therefore, it is likely that EHD-related mortality was offset in-part by lowered fall harvest in the region and the number of deer surviving to spring was comparable to previous years. Overall, white-tailed deer have a high reproductive capacity in agricultural landscapes and mature female deer typically produce 2 fawns annually in Iowa (Iowa DNR, unpublished data). Considering these numbers it is likely that the fall harvest will rebound to previous levels in south-central Iowa pending favorable weather conditions remain for deer through summer and for hunters in fall.

Raccoon observations decreased in 2020 following two years of increased counts. Increased raccoon counts coincided with lower trapping license sales in Iowa and lower pelt values in the fur market (Evelsizer 2018). The reason for the decreased count in 2020 is unclear and may be a result of variability inherent in our survey method, variability in spring weather conditions, realized population declines related to disease (e.g., canine distemper virus), or other undetermined factors. Overall, the decline was not significantly lower than in 2019 and counts remained above the long-term average.

The most notable change in spotlight counts occurred for red fox in which counts decreased 58% from 2019. The 2019 count was atypically high compared to previous years and a decreased count in 2020 was not unexpected because red fox counts have regularly fluctuated during the past 15 years. However, the magnitude of this decline was surprising considering that archery hunter observations and reported harvest were mostly stable in 2019 (Harms et al. 2019, Iowa

DNR unpublished data). Spotlight detections for red fox are challenging to collect due to their small size and evasive behavior (Ruetten et al. 2003), and as a result some inherent variability exists in these data. Overall, the red fox count was 39% below the long-term average and similar to observed lows in 2014 and 2016. It is unclear why record high and low counts for red fox were observed during the past two spotlight surveys or whether a similar decline will be observed in the archery hunter survey or reported harvest in 2020. Additional analyses are needed to better understand how red fox observations vary with annual weather conditions (e.g., winter severity, spring temperature).

Alternatively, bobcat counts reached an all-time high in 2020 ($n = 8$). Despite stable and expanding populations in the state, bobcat observations remain low using spotlighting methods. Bobcats tend to be secretive and elusive, and their association with forest cover may limit our ability to observe individuals. The state archery hunter survey likely provides a more reliable index for bobcat populations and indicates stable to growing populations in all regions of the state (Harms et al. 2019).

Opossums are sensitive to winter temperatures (Gillette 1980, Gehrt et al. 2006) and spring spotlight counts for opossum are negatively correlated with winter weather severity ($r = -0.60$; Boustead et al. 2015). Opossum populations, however, have the ability to rebound quickly following severe winters because females are capable of producing 2 litters per year consisting of a large number of young (13 joeys/litter; Gipson and Kamler 2001). For example, in 2014, the opossum count was the third lowest since 2006, which coincided with the 6th coldest and 14th wettest winter in recorded history in Iowa (Hillaker 2014). Alternatively, opossum counts increased 70% in 2016 following above normal temperatures in February and March that ranked in the upper 25th percentile of historical records for their respective months (Hillaker 2014). In 2019, opossum counts declined 48% following a severe winter (Glisan 2019), however, counts in 2020 responded positively likely as a result of mild winter conditions during January and February (Glisan 2020) and increased survival of adults into spring.

Observations for coyote have steadily declined during the past 5-years, although the 2020 count remained above the long-term average ($\bar{x} = 77$). During the past 5 years, all-time record high harvests have been reported for coyotes. Coyotes rank first and second of all species pursued by Iowa trappers and predator hunters in terms of effort or time afield (Iowa DNR, unpublished data). It is unclear whether low raccoon pelt prices have increased harvest pressure on coyotes or whether some other mechanism (e.g., disease) has affected populations. Archery hunter observations for coyotes similarly declined in 6 of 9 regions in 2019, although the long-term trends are stable to increasing (Harms et al. 2019).

Both badger and skunk observations remained relatively stable in 2020. Badger are considered a species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) throughout much of the Midwest, USA, and their status as a SGCN is being evaluated in Iowa as well. Badger observations are generally low and the 2019 and 2020 counts represent a 2-year high for the species. Alternatively, skunk observations during the past 15 years have gradually fluctuated. The 2019 count was similar to the high count in 2011, after which, counts steadily declined for the subsequent 3 years. It is unclear if the marginal decline observed in 2020 represents a similar trend and whether continued declines will be observed during the next few years. Overall, spotlight surveys for mustelids (e.g., badger, skunk, mink, weasel) are challenging because spotlighting is most effective for species that are readily detectable by eye shine (e.g., deer, raccoon). Mustelids are rarely identified by eye shine and must be close to the observer for detection (Gehrt et al. 2006). Regardless, spotlight counts provide independent and consistent indices for populations and are an important component of furbearer management in the state.

The spotlight survey provides one of the only indices for mink in Iowa and indicates that populations fluctuate every 3–4 years. However, mink observations are rare because surveys are not focused on riparian or wetland areas typical of mink habitat use. Reliable population trends for mink are possible using spotlight observations, however, annual counts may be highly variable (Waller 2010) and are typically low for our survey ($\bar{x} = 7.7$).

For this survey house cats are defined as free-ranging domestic cats located in rural areas unconfined and away from farmsteads and human developments (e.g., feral cats). Observations for house cats have declined 73% since 2012. A similar pattern was observed for archery hunter observations, although the reason for these declines is unclear and may be related to several interacting factors (e.g., disease, predation, or declining rural human populations; Warner 1985). Predation by house cats on native fauna poses a serious conservation concern in North America, particularly for birds and small mammals (Dauphine and Cooper 2009). The effect of potentially declining rural cat populations on native fauna remains unknown, although declining cat populations is likely beneficial for several wildlife taxa across the state.

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Spring Spotlight Survey provides consistent long-term population indices for several wildlife species in Iowa. Population trends derived from the survey are critical for monitoring populations and informing science-based management decisions. When paired with long-term harvest and other survey data, the development of population abundance or growth models may be possible and provide more robust metrics for evaluating populations in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank all current and past Iowa DNR staff and volunteers who traveled thousands of miles of gravel roads across the state, often until early morning hours, to complete the Spring Spotlight Survey each year. We appreciate the opportunity to present these data on their behalf. W. J. Suchy (former Iowa DNR Wildlife Research Section supervisor) developed the current study design for the Spring Spotlight Survey; we appreciate his efforts to expand the survey statewide and across multiple species taxa to improve the quality of the data collected.

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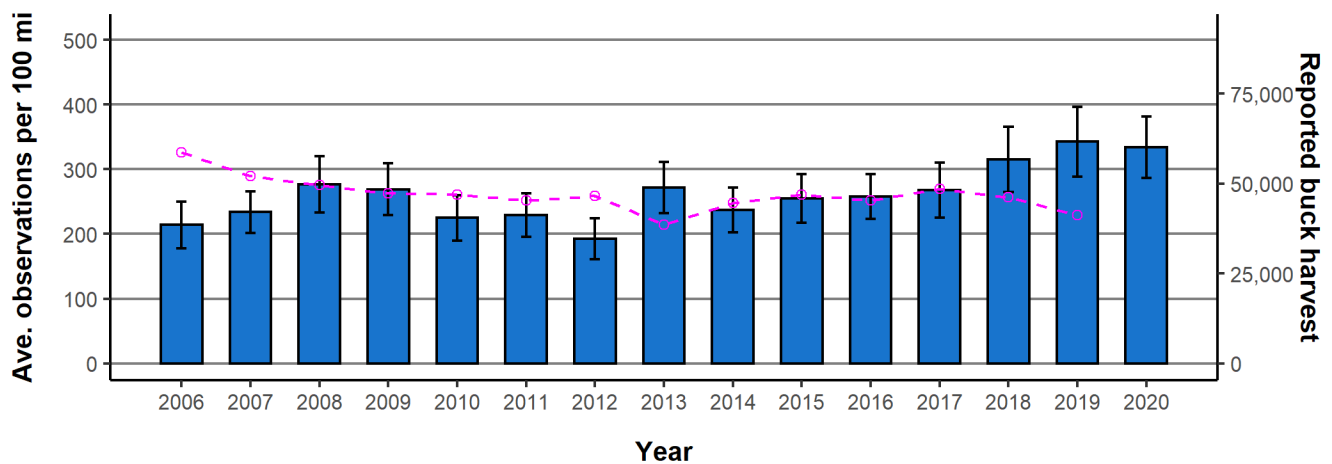


Figure 2. Average white-tailed deer observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dashed line indicates the reported statewide buck harvest.

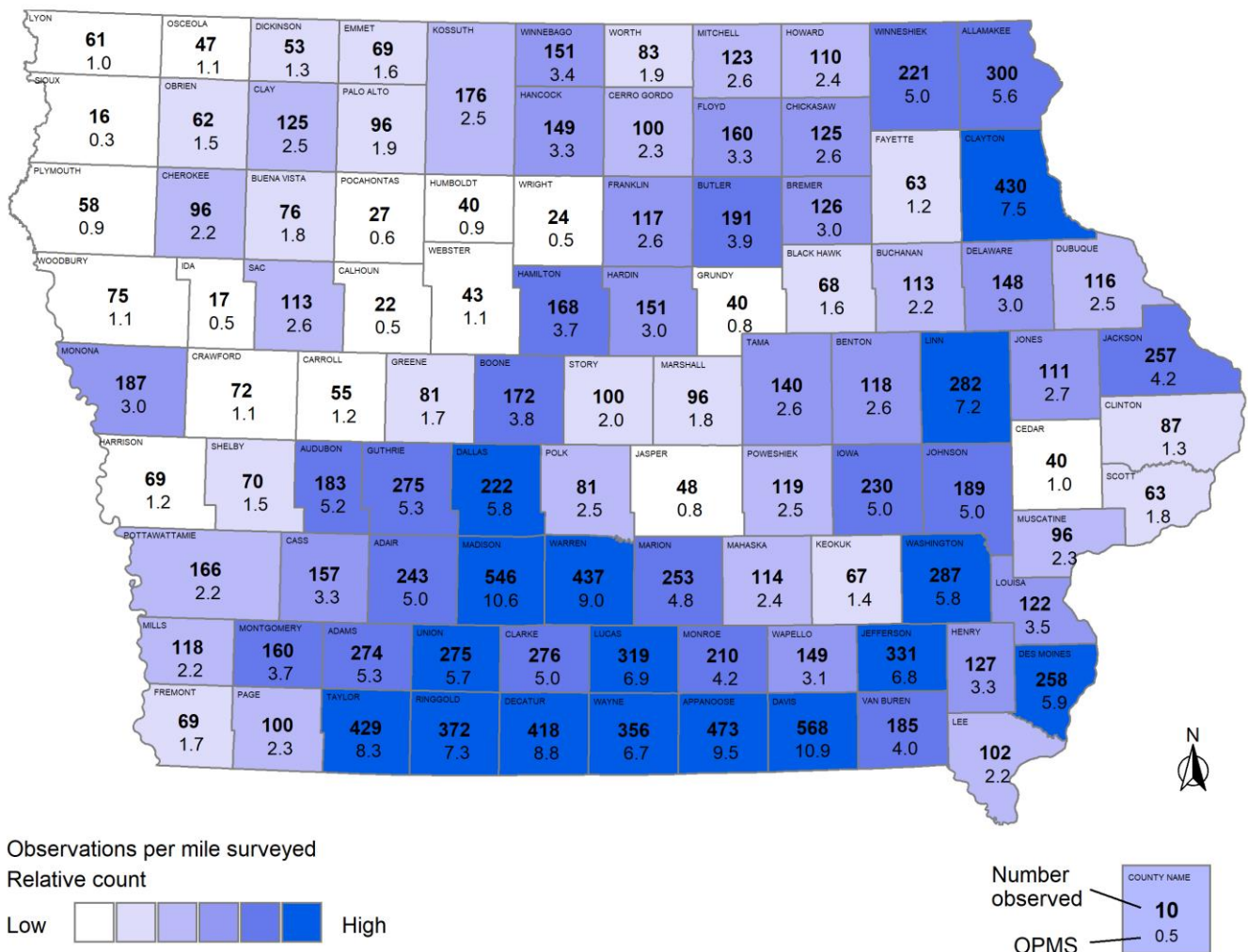


Figure 3. Total number of white-tailed deer observations per county during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2020. Color shading indicates the number of animals counted per mile surveyed (OPMS).

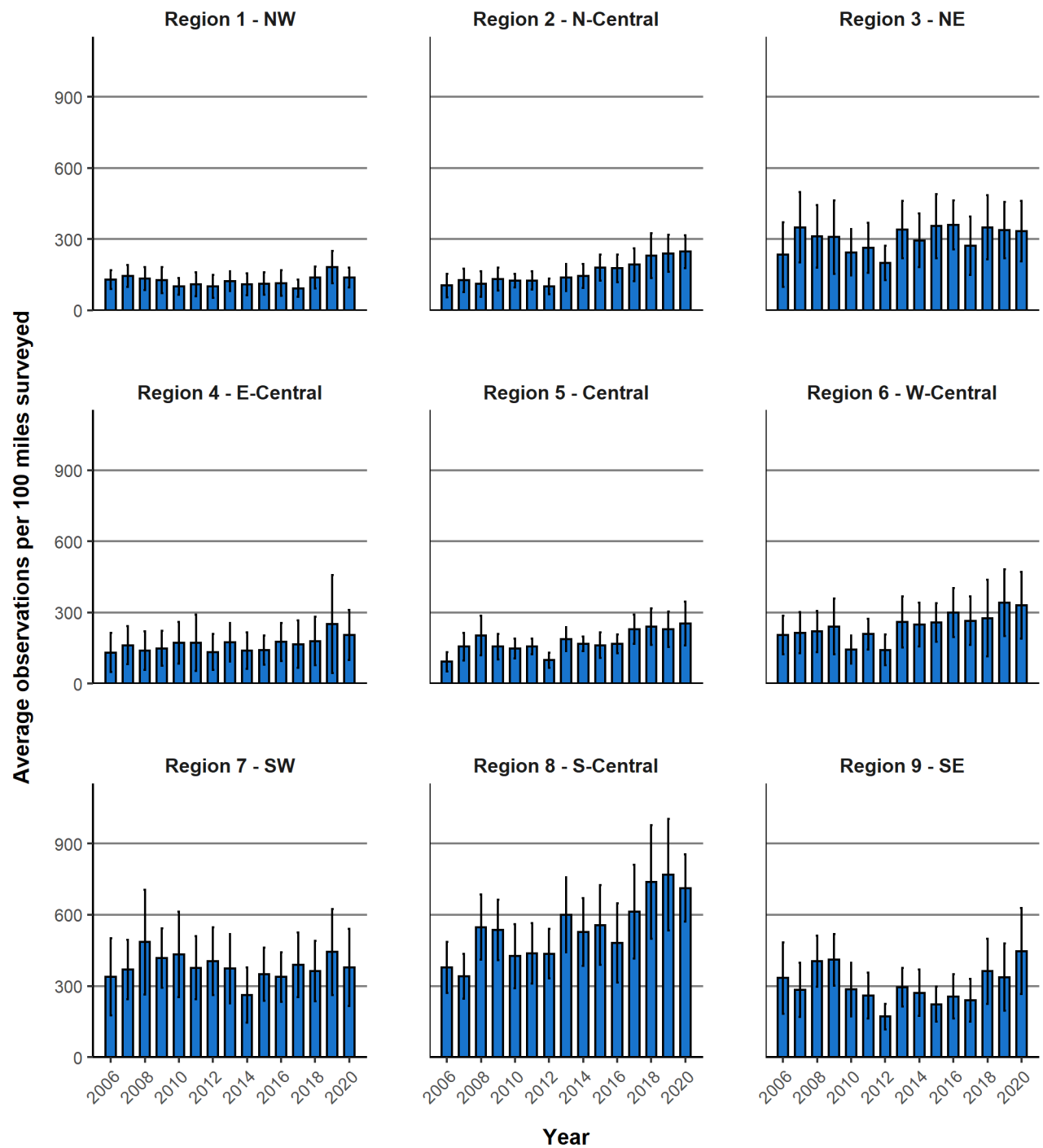


Figure 4. Average white-tailed deer observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

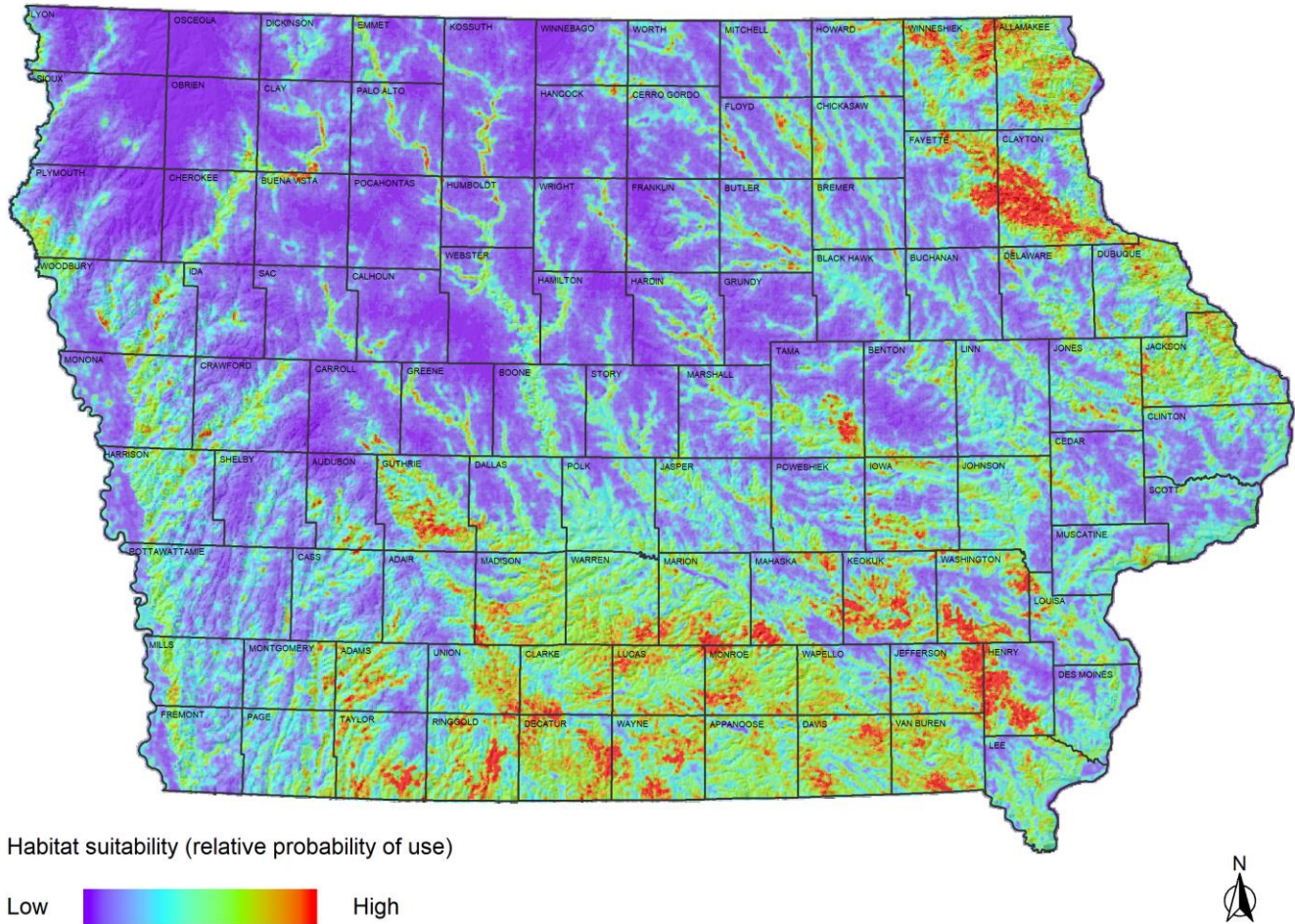


Figure 6. Habitat suitability (i.e., relative probability of use) for white-tailed deer in Iowa based on a resource selection function (RSF; see Kaminski et al. [2019] for details). The RSF model was predicted using spotlight observations for deer from 2012–2016 and the accuracy of the model was tested using 2017 observations ($R^2 = 0.95$). High values indicate areas of higher relative habitat quality for deer and low values indicate lower habitat quality.

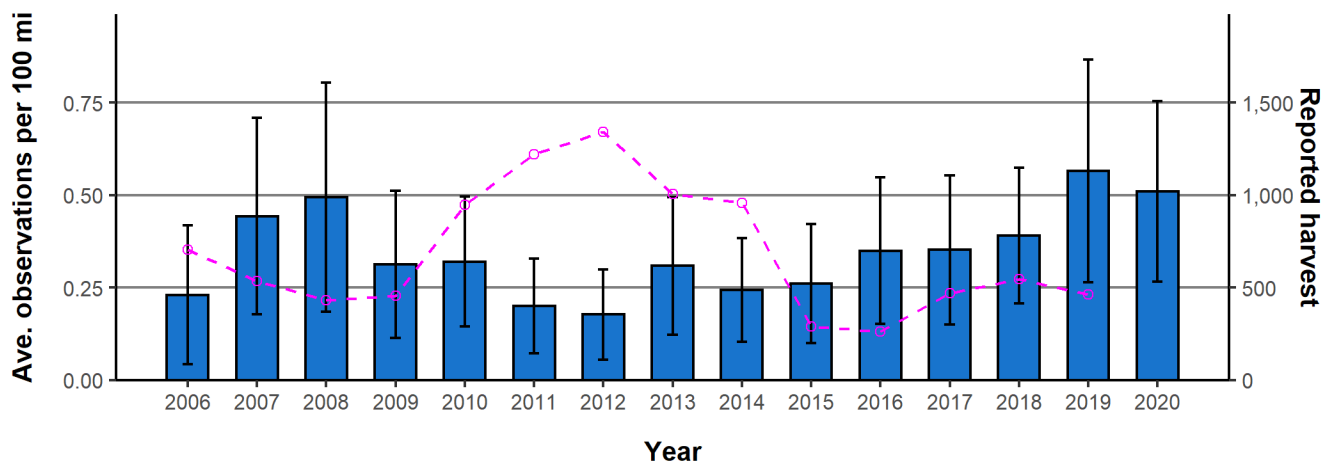


Figure 7. Average badger observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dashed line indicates the reported statewide harvest.

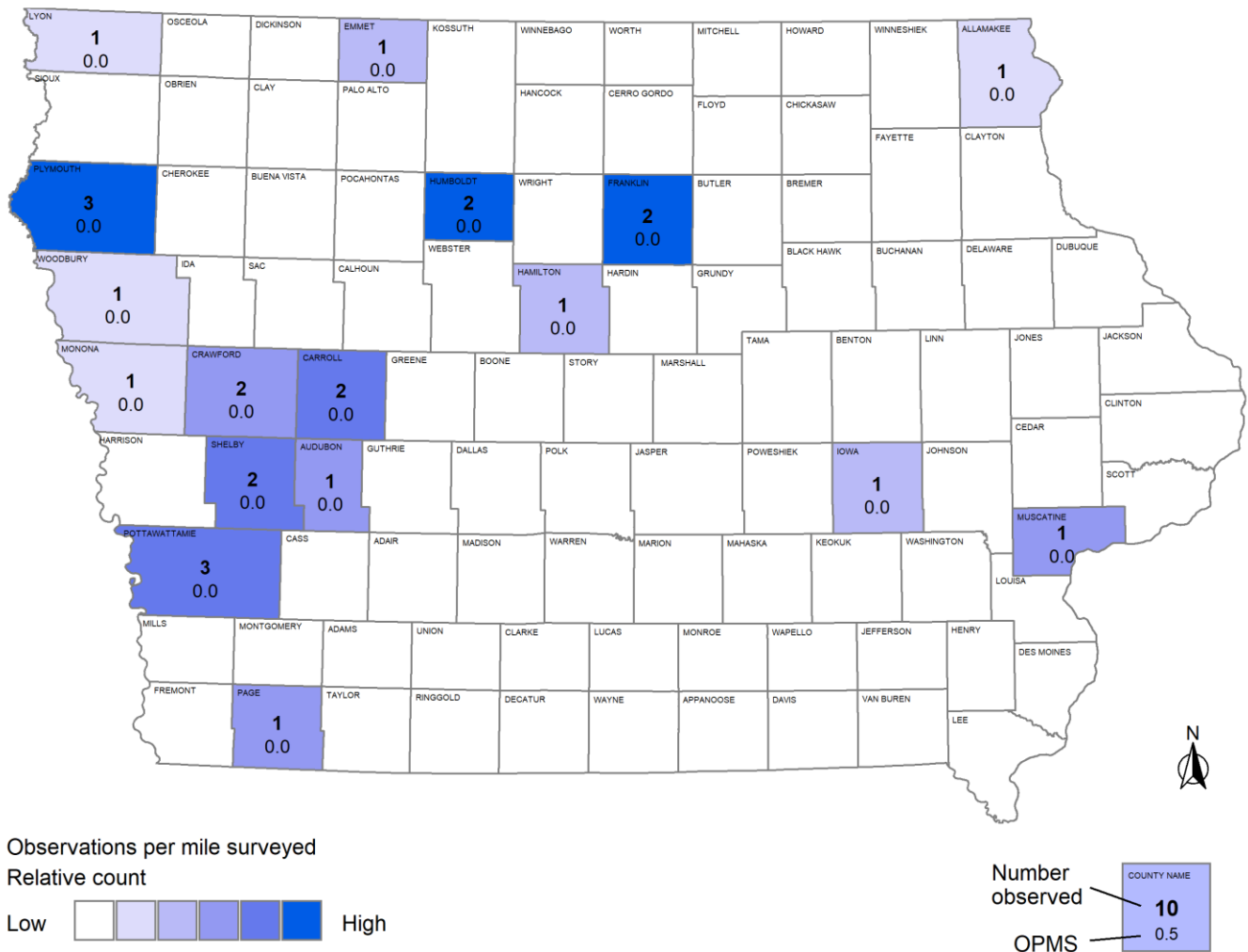


Figure 8. Total number of badger observations per county during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2020. Color shading indicates the number of animals counted per mile surveyed (OPMS).

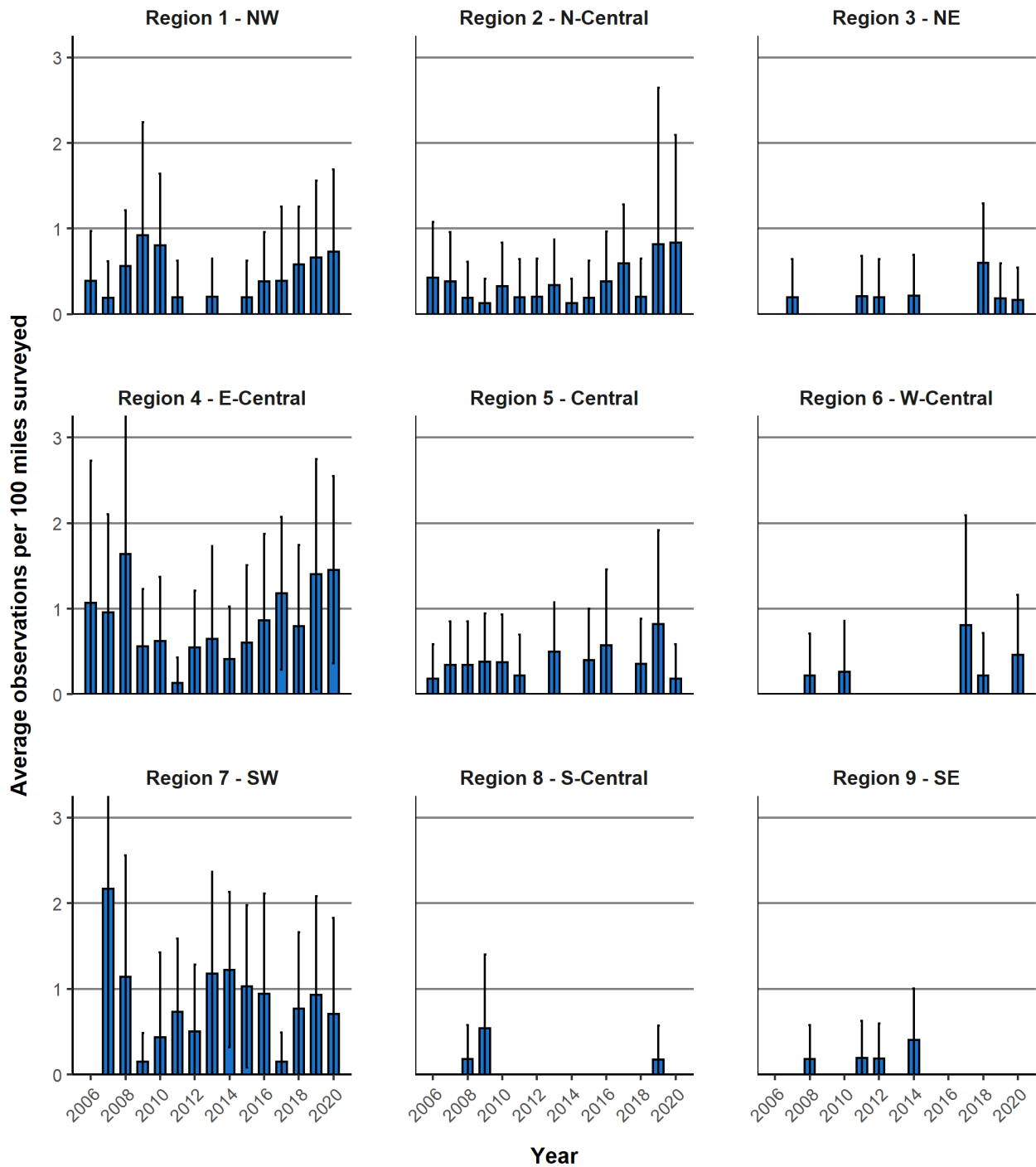
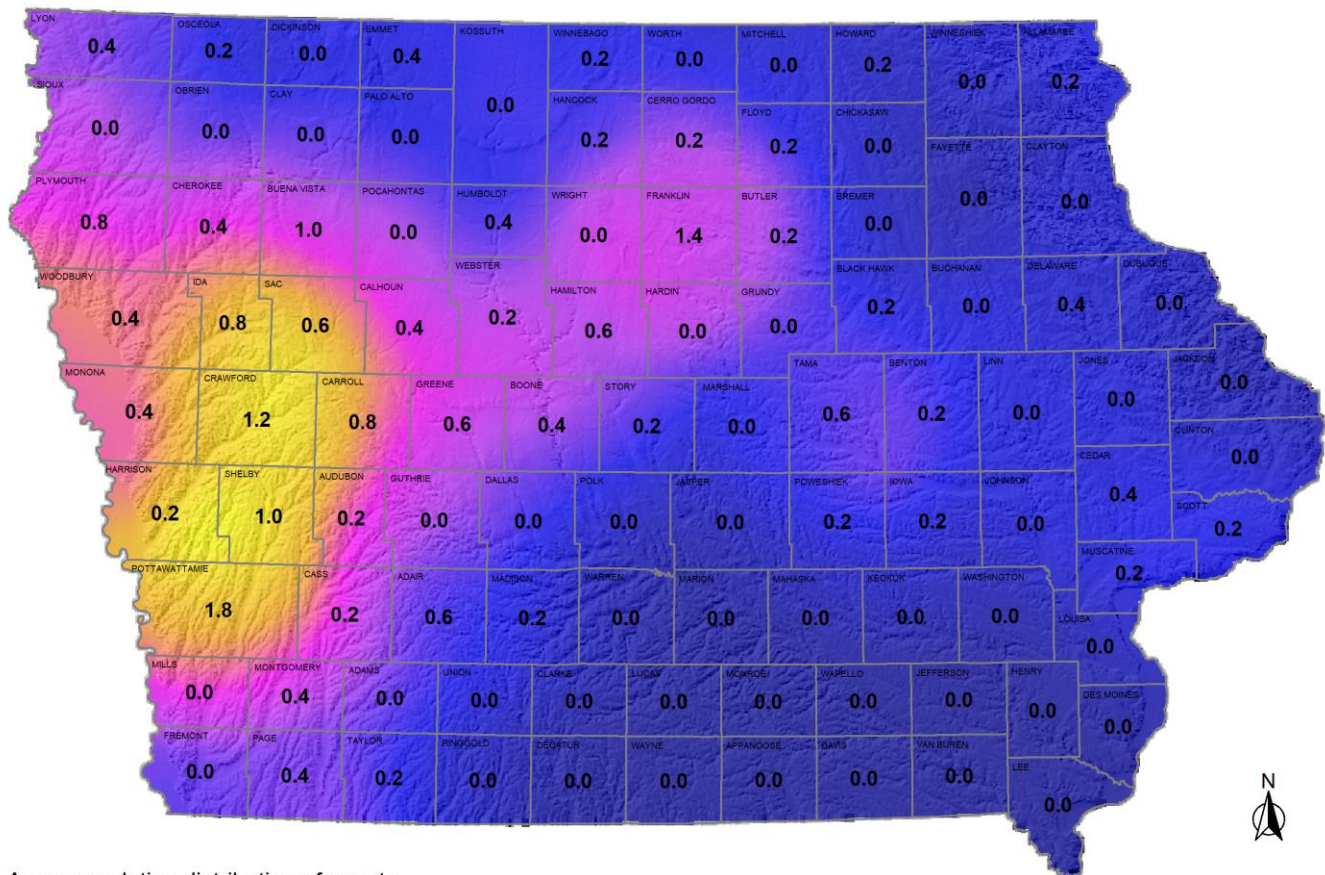


Figure 9. Average badger observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.



Average relative distribution of counts
5-year average

Low High

Average number observed
COUNTY NAME
10

Figure 10. Average relative distribution of spring spotlight observations for badger during the past 5 years in Iowa. The number of observations per county is relative to the highest and lowest number of observations across all counties during the survey and may not represent an over- or under-abundance of the species (i.e., high counts are considered high relative to those observed in all other counties).

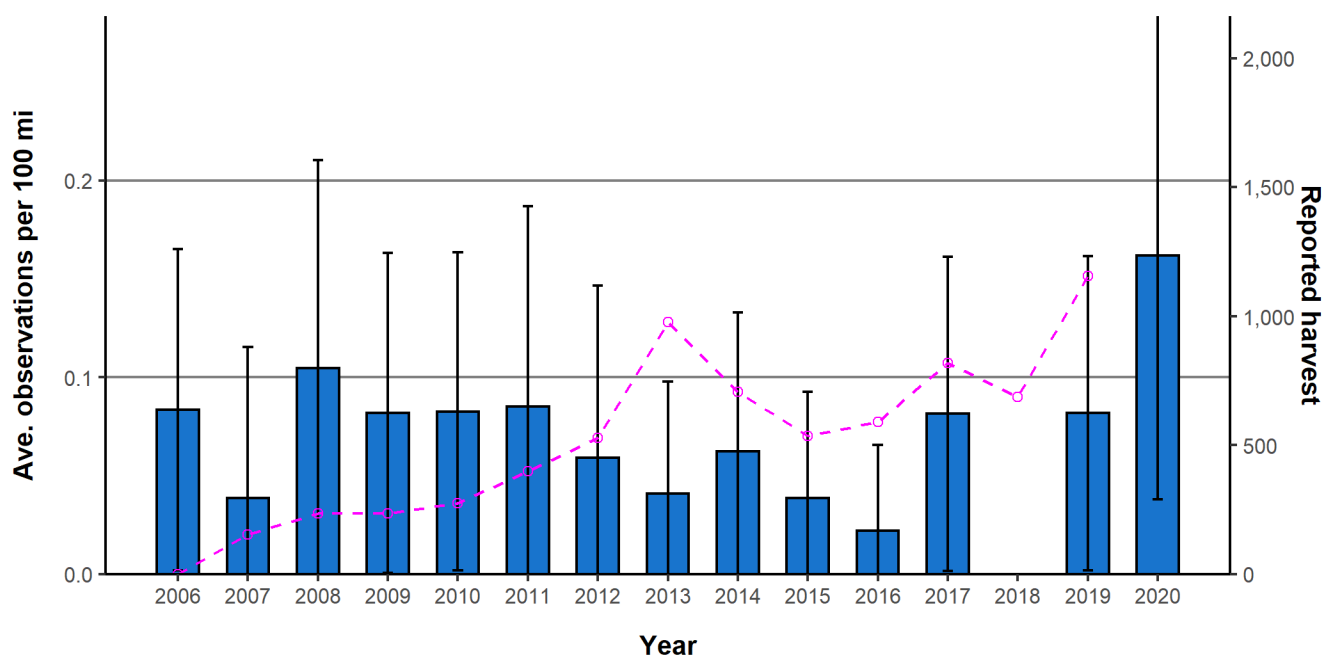


Figure 11. Average bobcat observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dashed line indicates the reported statewide harvest.

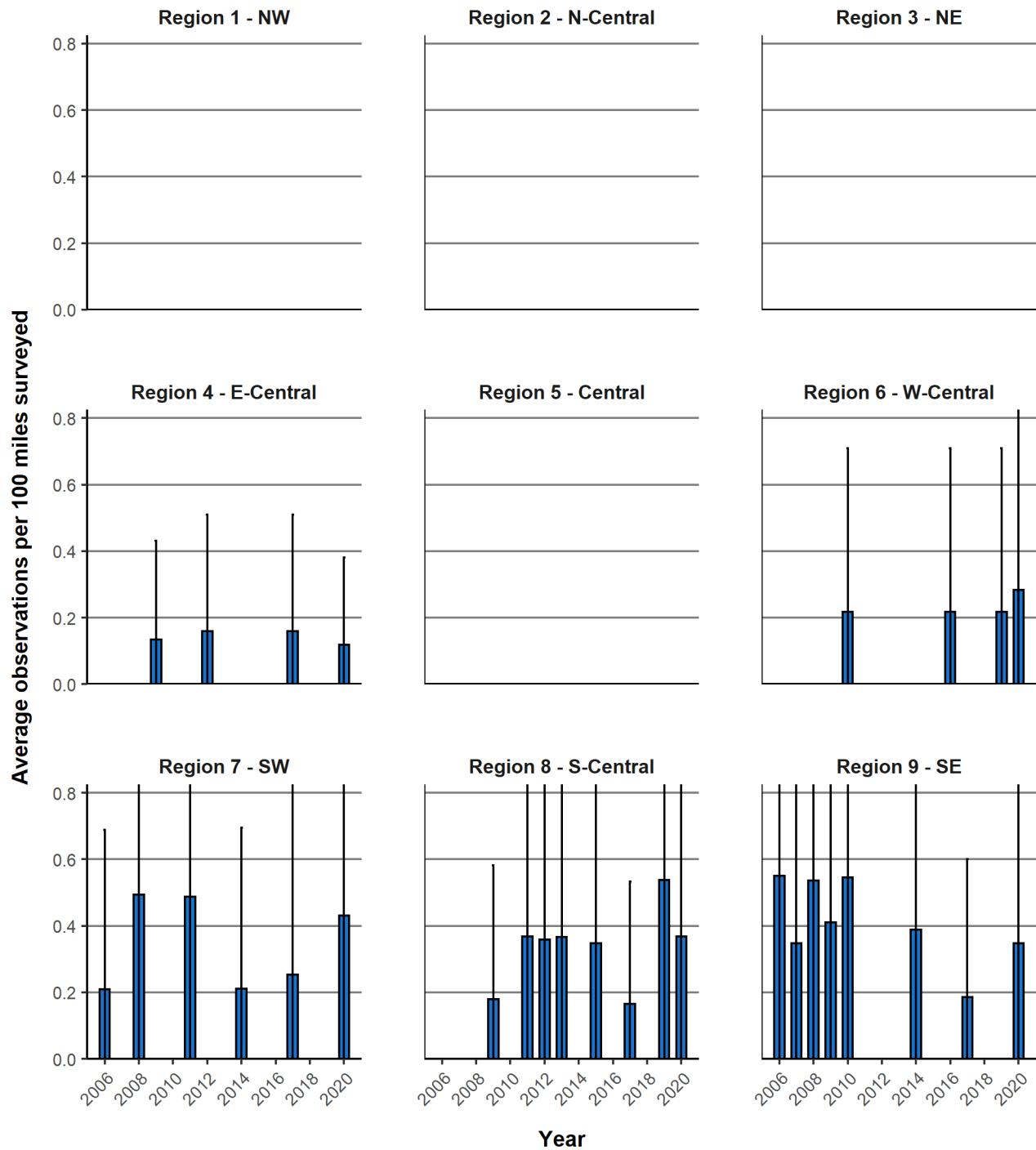
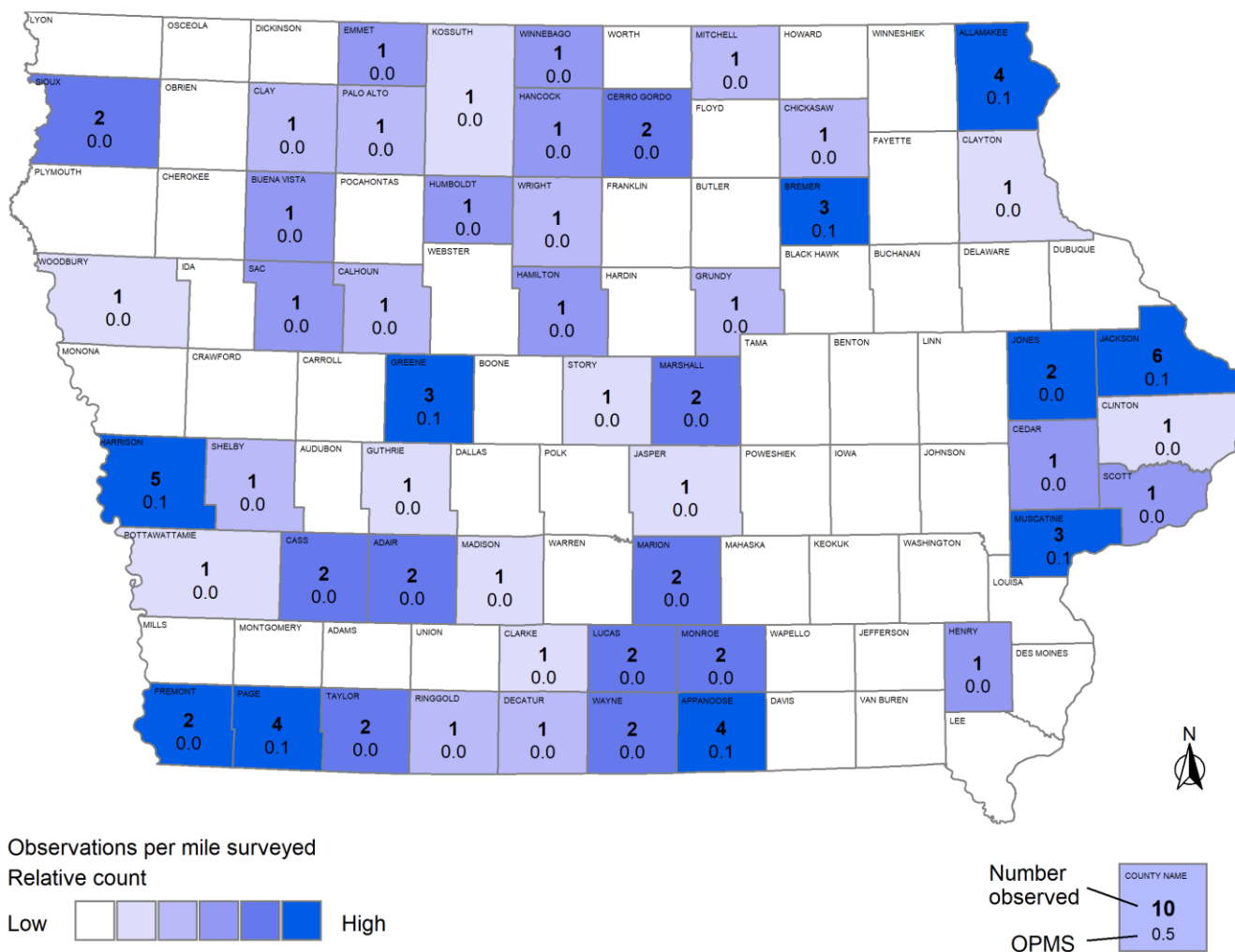
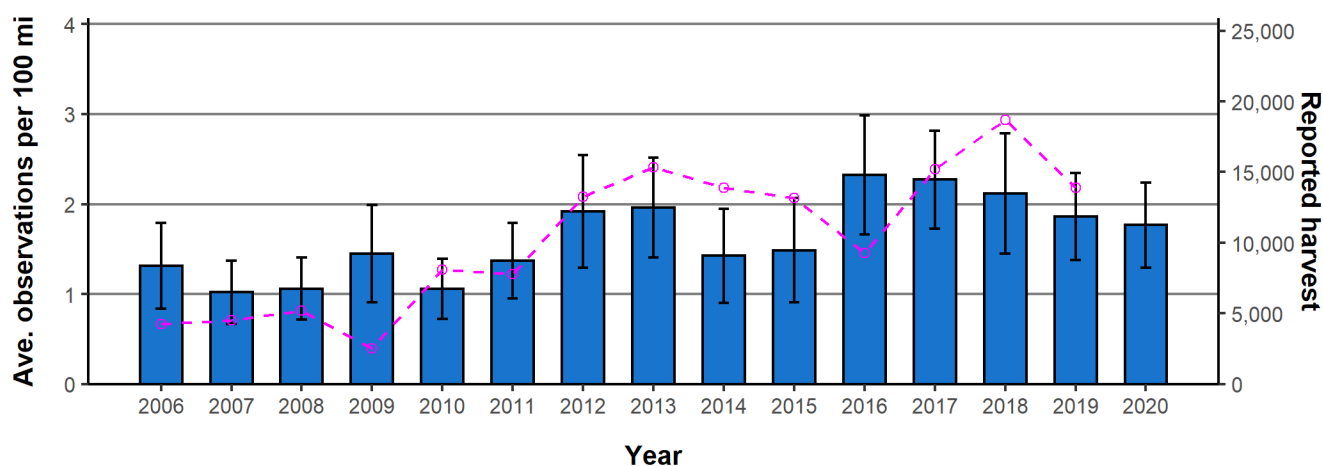


Figure 12. Average bobcat observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.



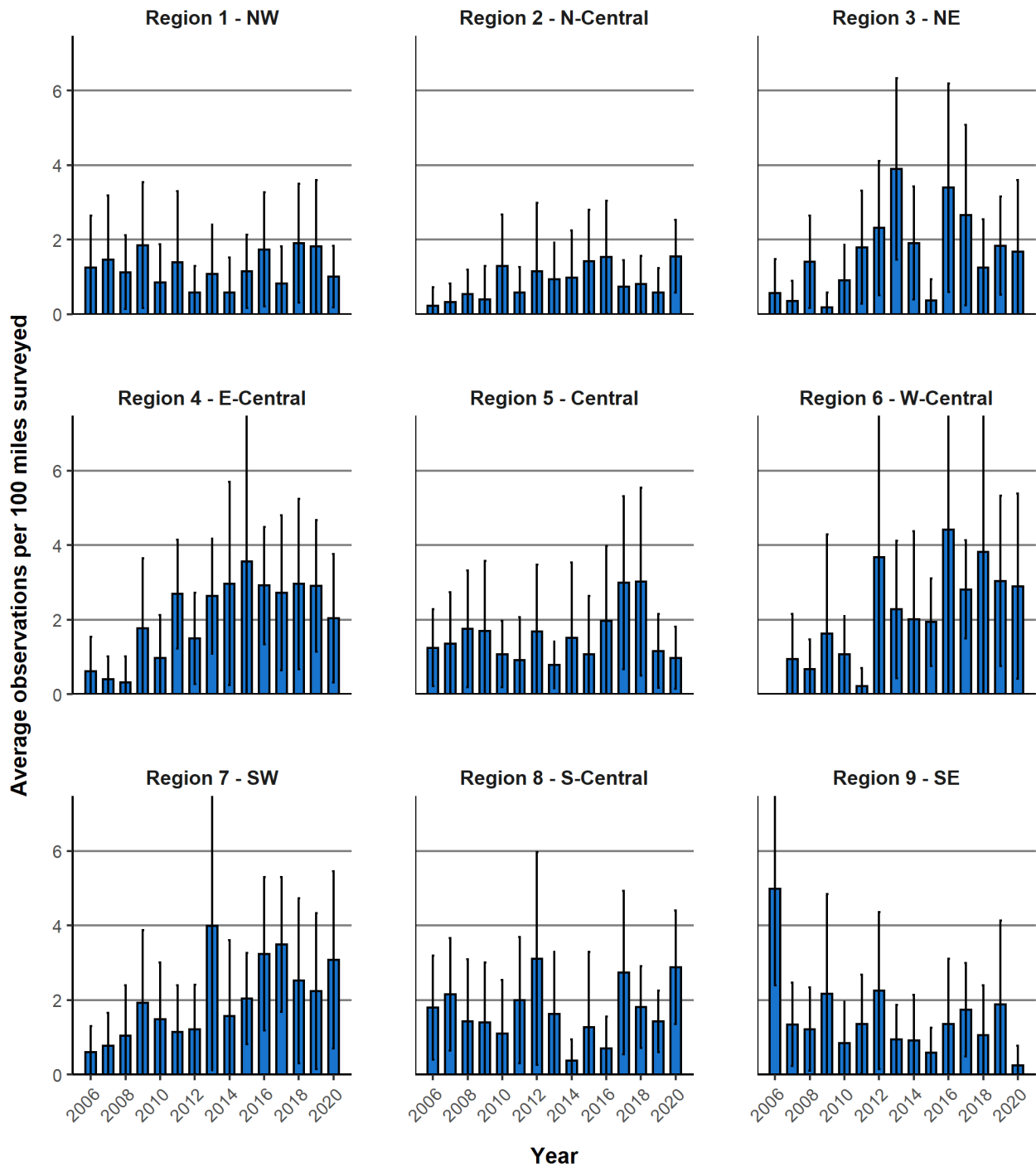


Figure 15. Average coyote observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

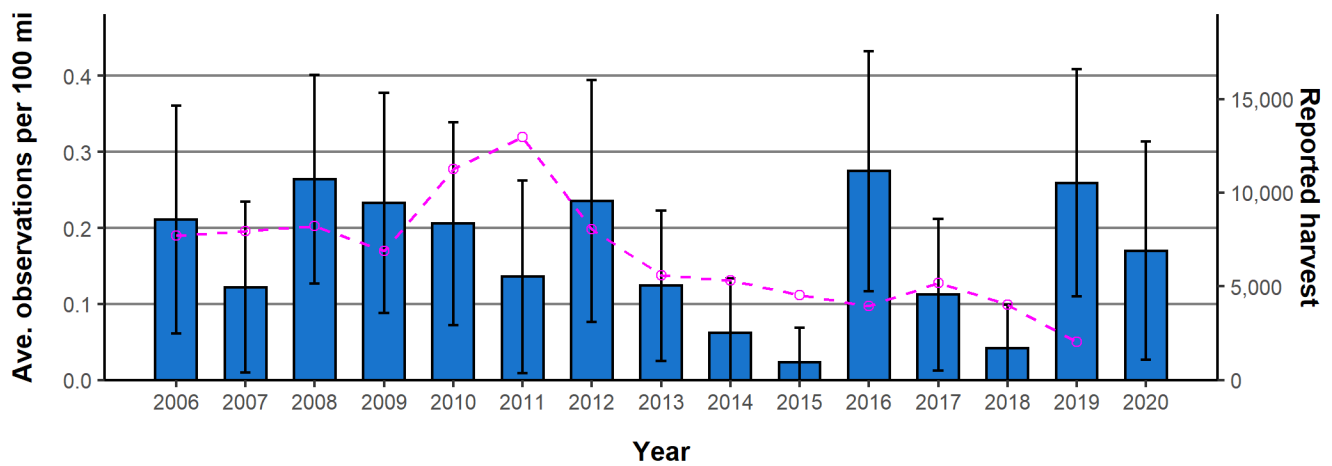


Figure 17. Average mink observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dashed line indicates the reported statewide harvest.

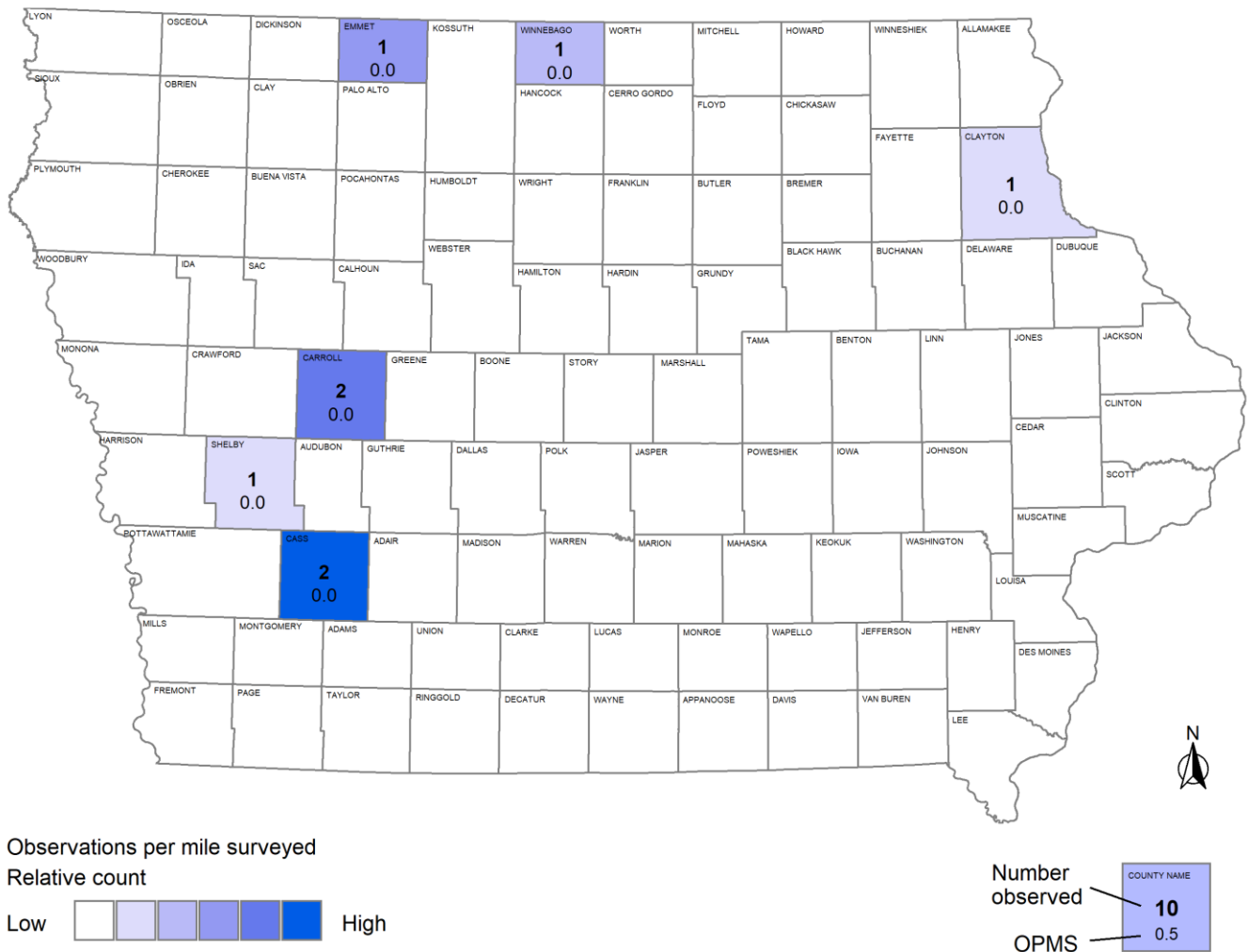


Figure 18. Total number of mink observations per county during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2020. Color shading indicates the number of animals counted per mile surveyed (OPMS).

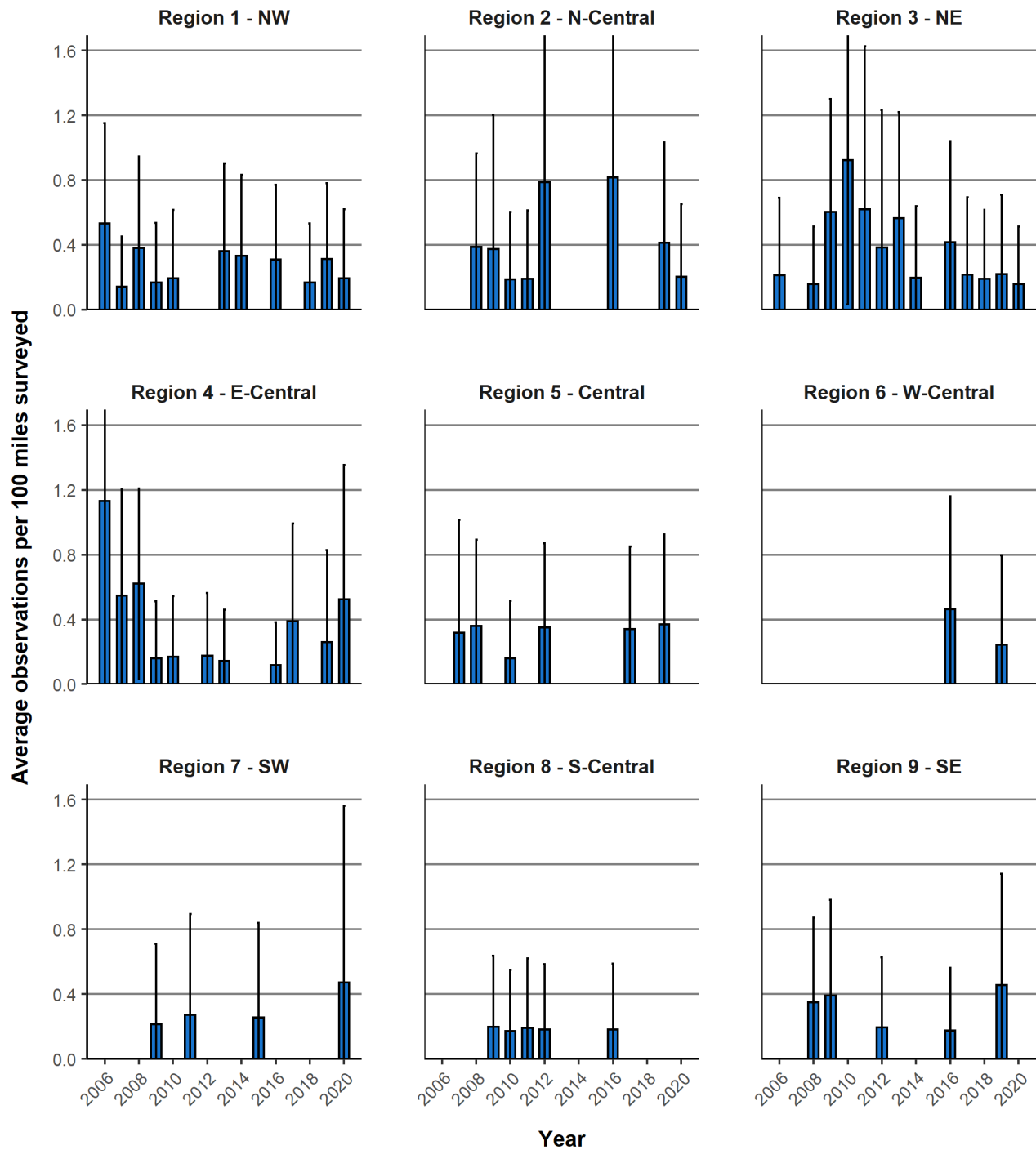


Figure 19. Average mink observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

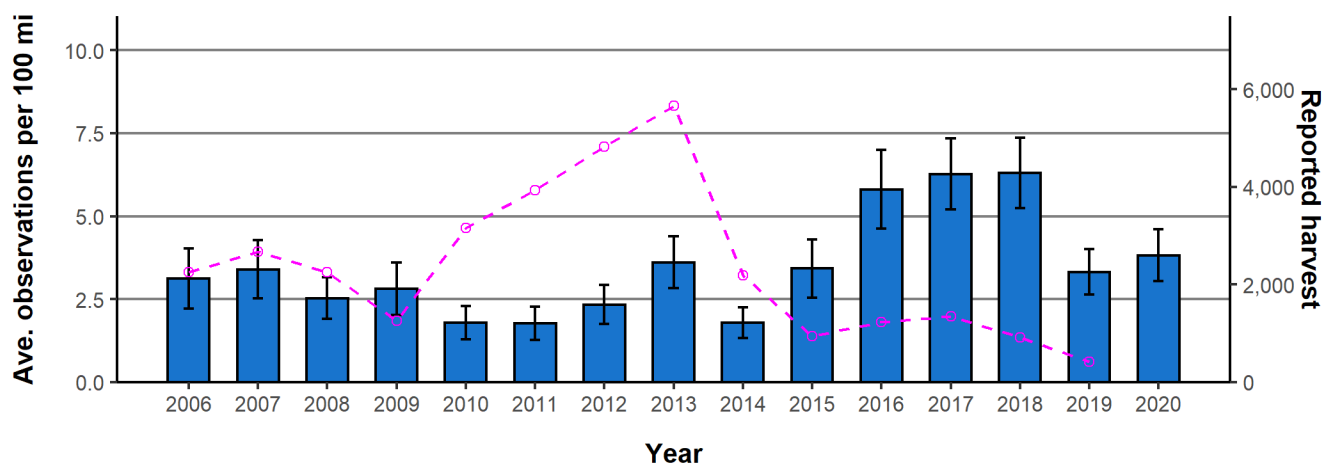


Figure 20. Average opossum observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dashed line indicates the reported statewide harvest.

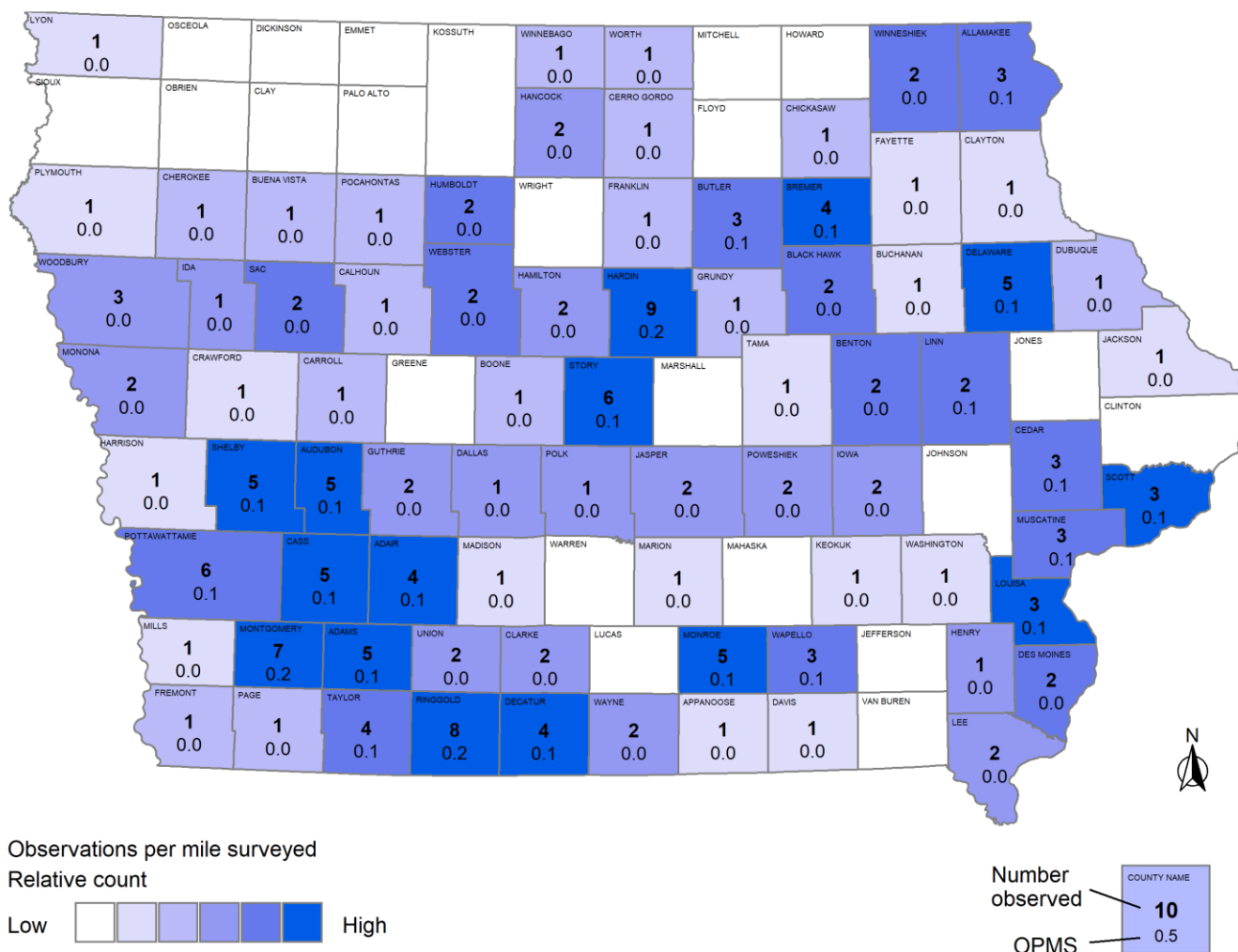


Figure 21. Total number of opossum observations per county during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2020. Color shading indicates the number of animals counted per mile surveyed (OPMS).

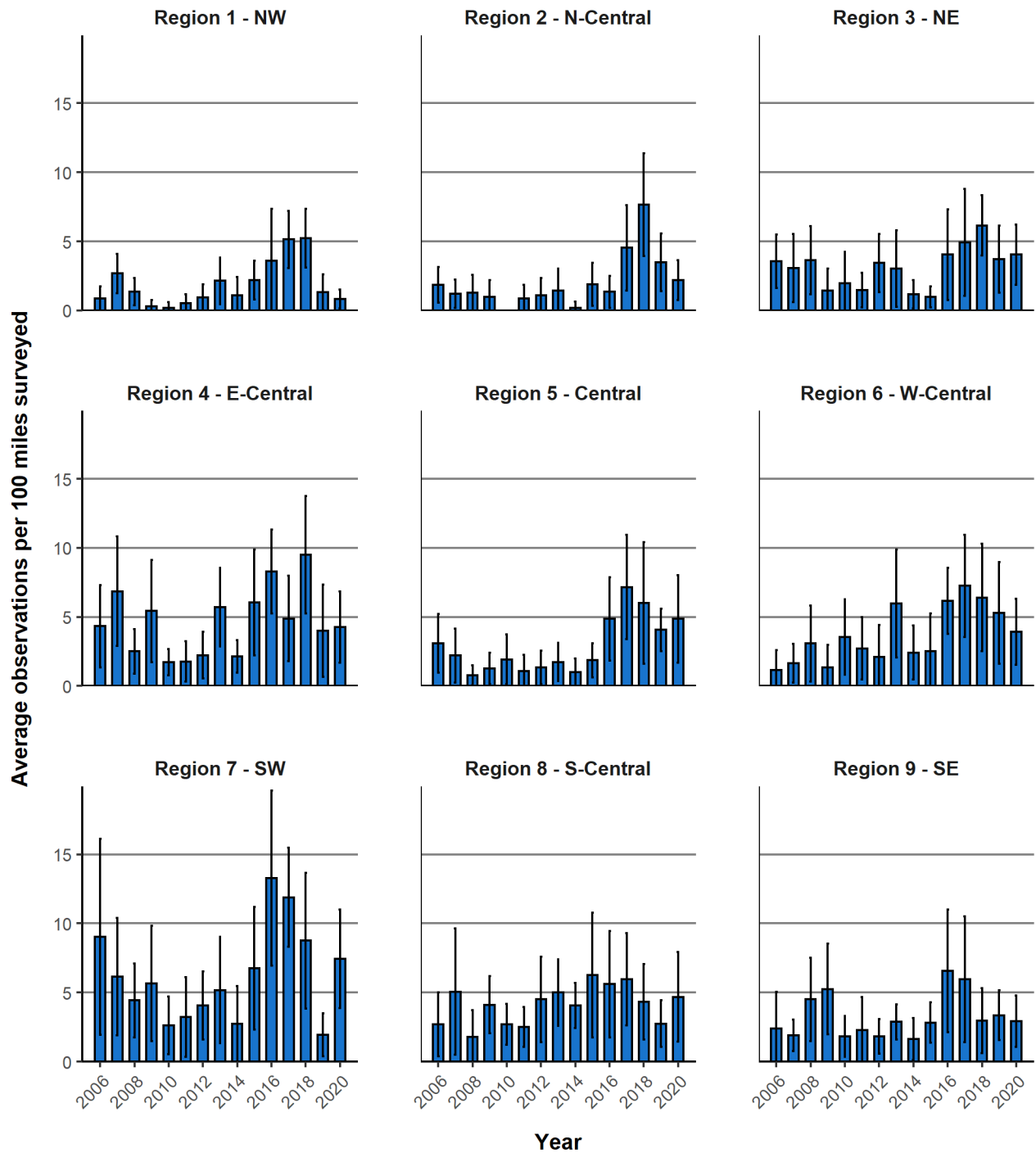
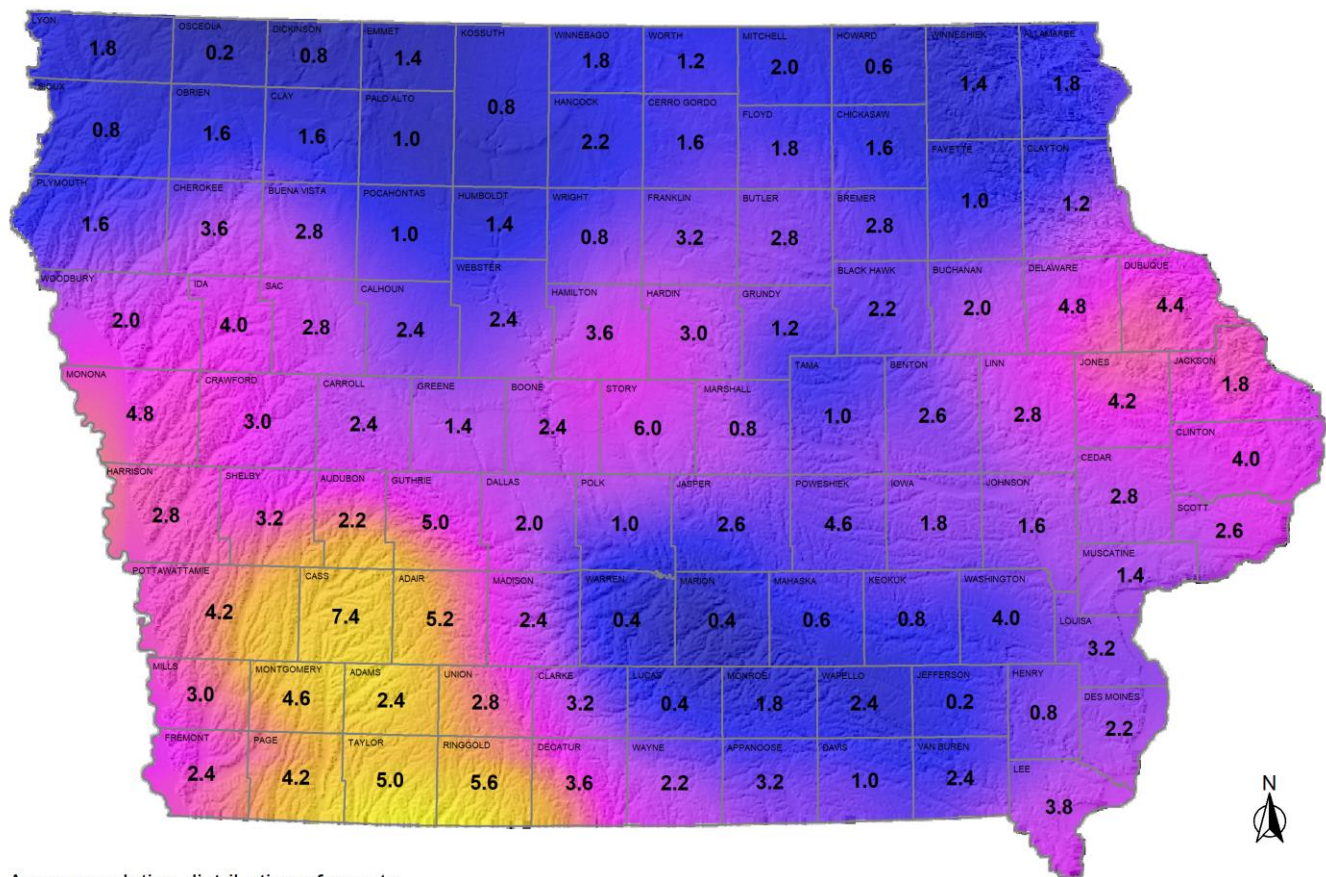


Figure 22. Average opossum observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.



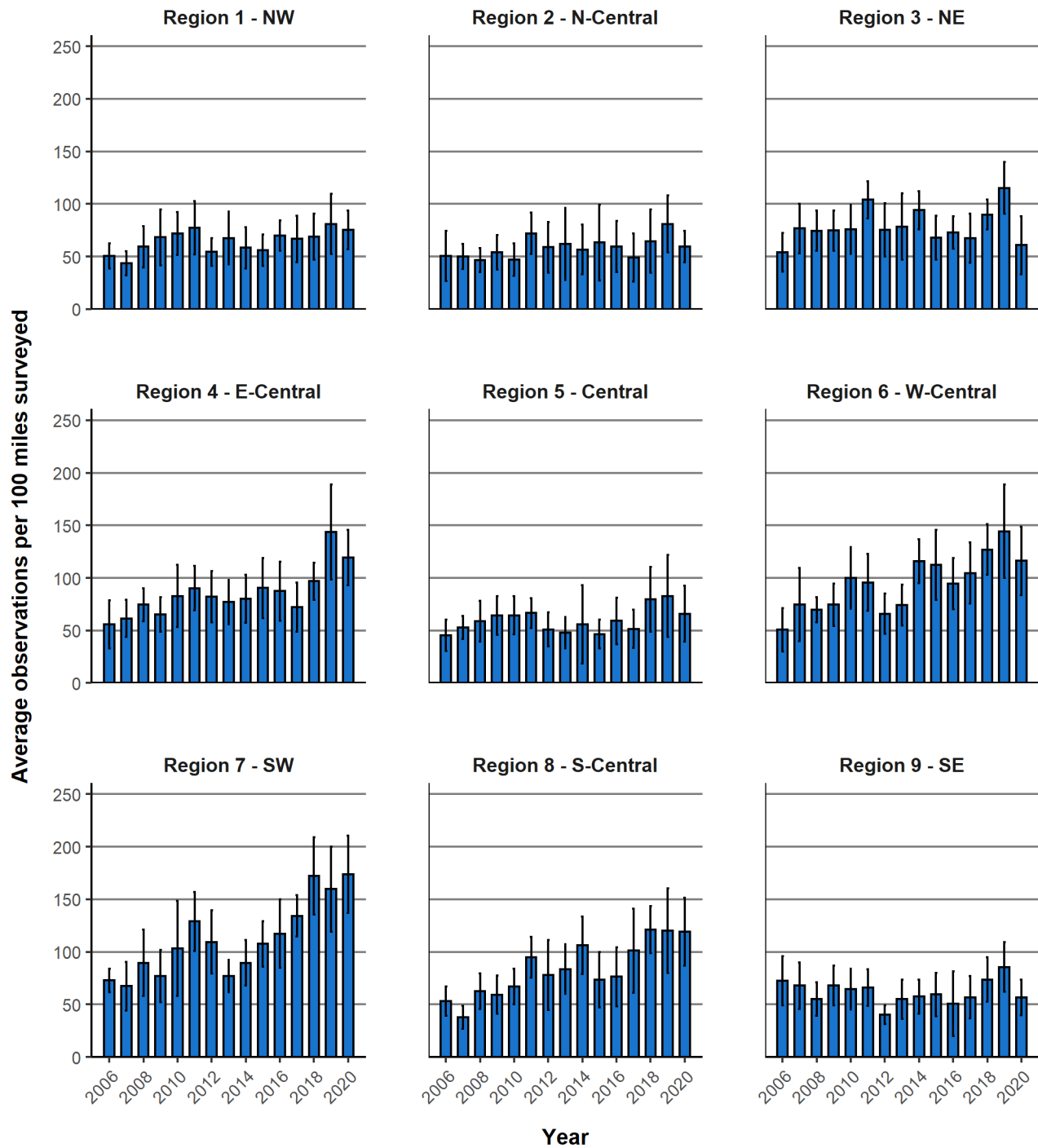


Figure 26. Average raccoon observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

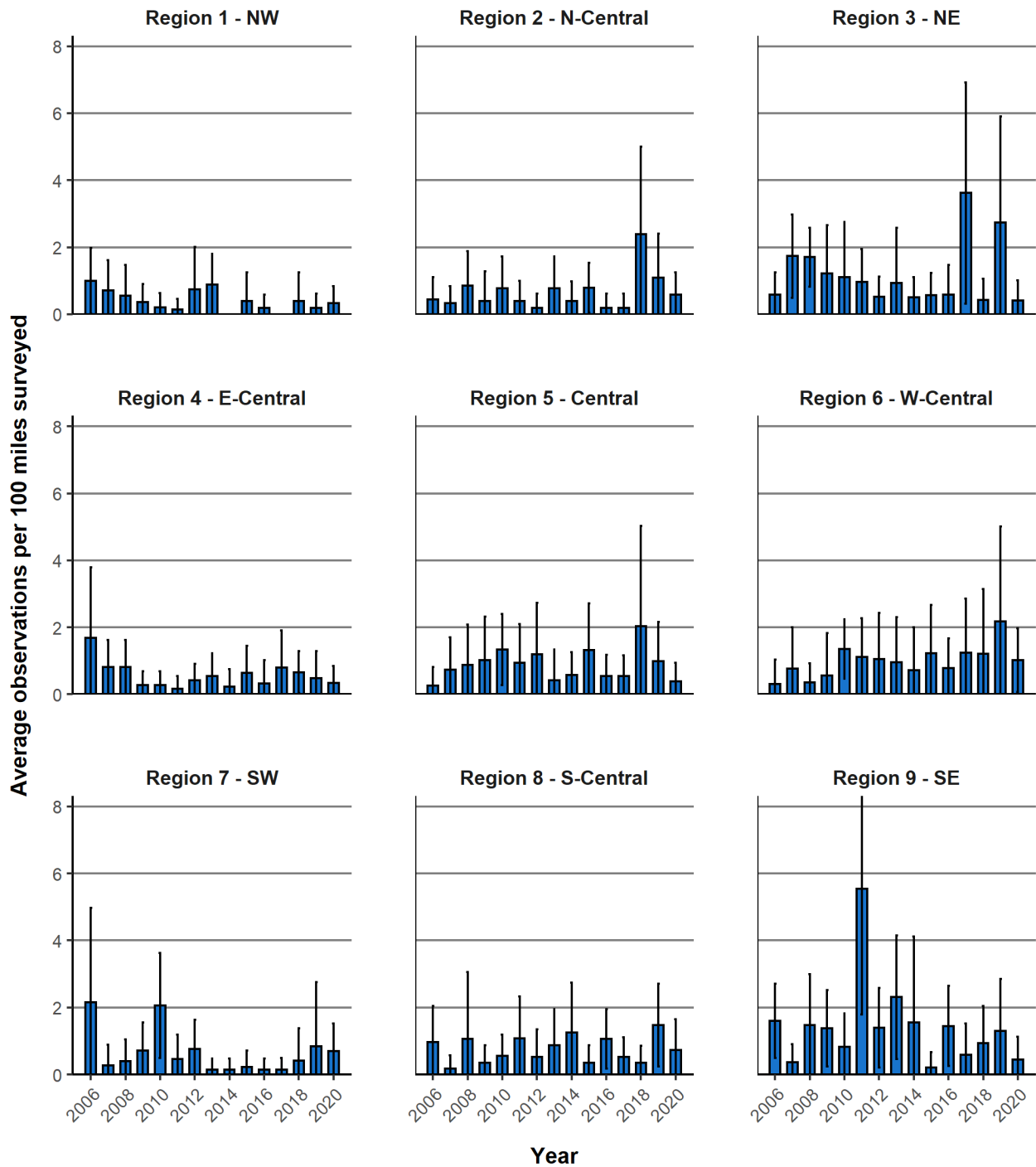
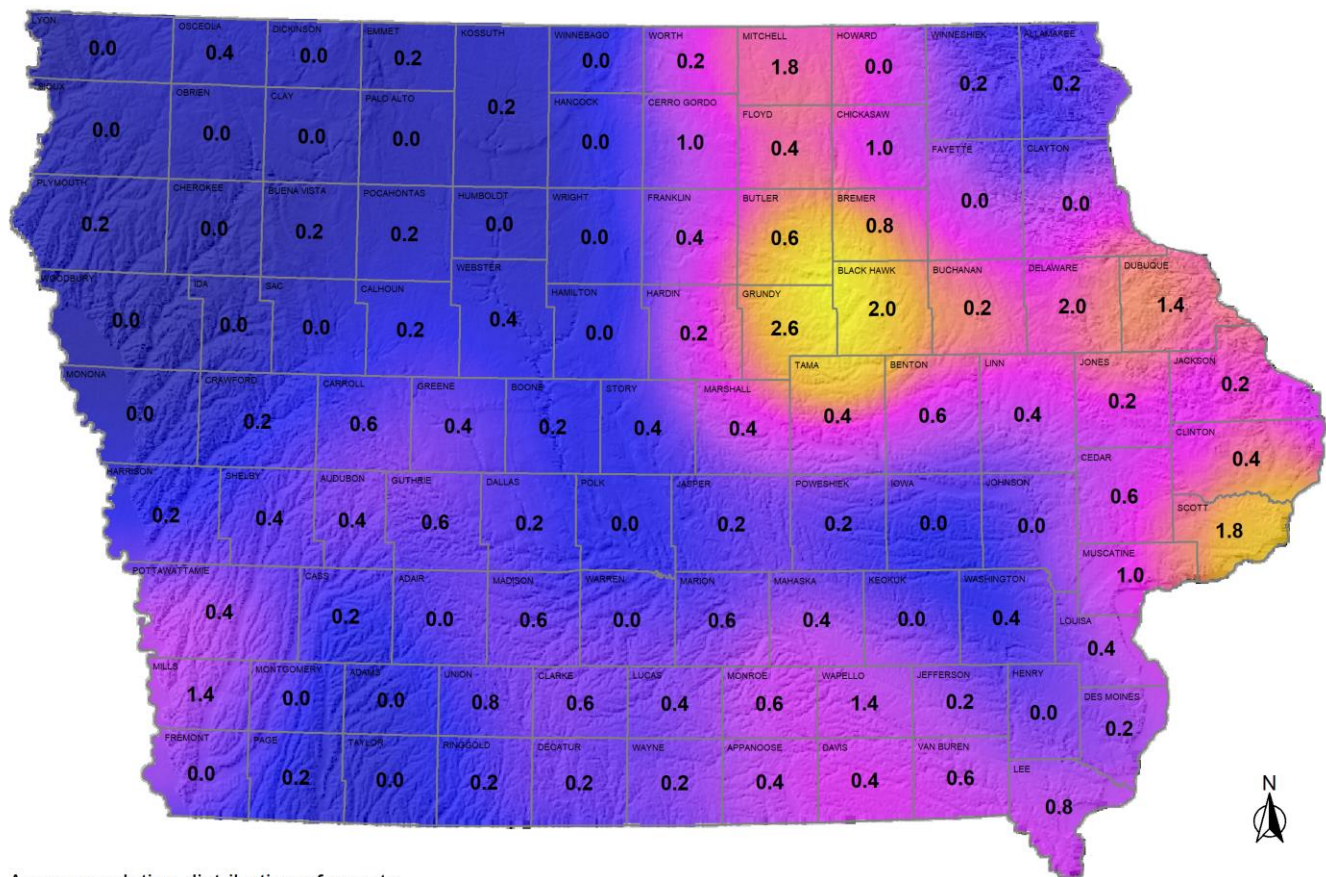


Figure 30. Average red fox observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Red fox includes observations listed as “fox” due to the rarity of gray fox in the state.



Average relative distribution of counts
5-year average

Low High

Average number observed

COUNTY NAME
10

Figure 31. Average relative distribution of spring spotlight observations for red fox during the past 5 years in Iowa. The number of observations per county is relative to the highest and lowest number of observations across all counties during the survey and may not represent an over- or under-abundance of the species (i.e., high counts are considered high relative to those observed in all other counties).

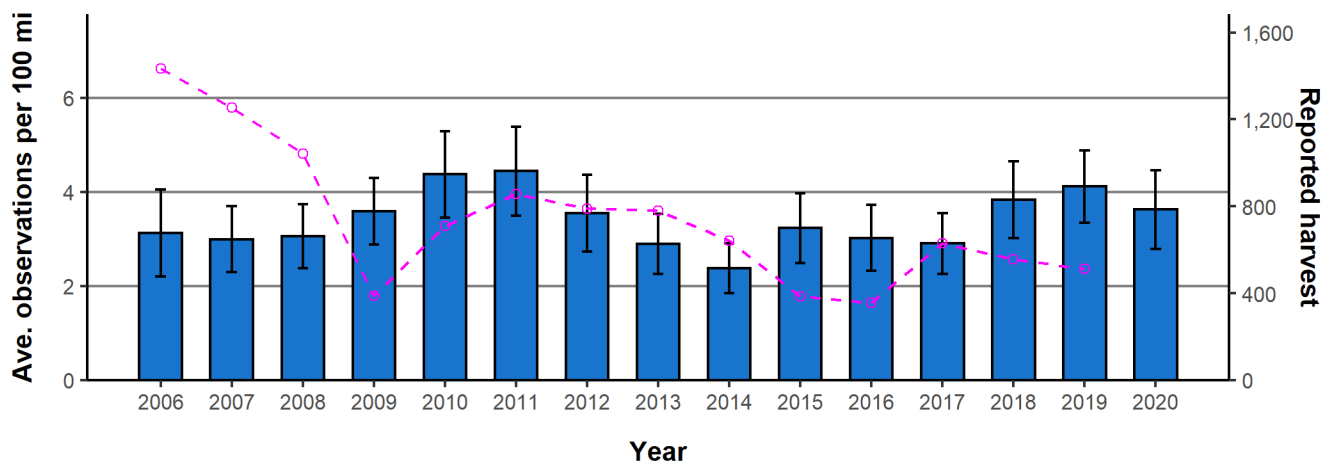


Figure 32. Average striped skunk observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dashed line indicates the reported statewide harvest.

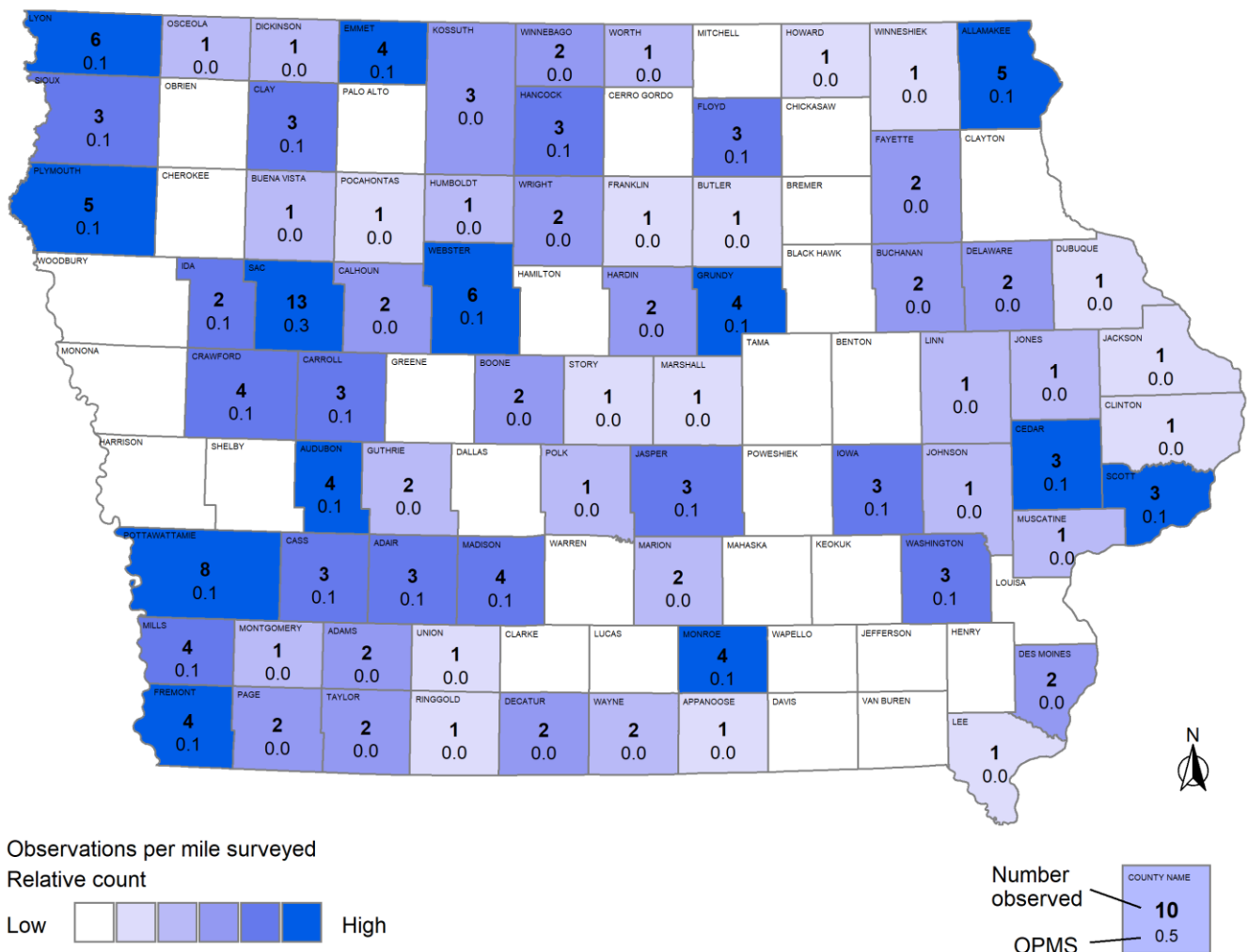


Figure 33. Total number of striped skunk observations per county during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2020. Color shading indicates the number of animals counted per mile surveyed (OPMS). Counts likely include few or no spotted skunk observations due to their rarity in the state.

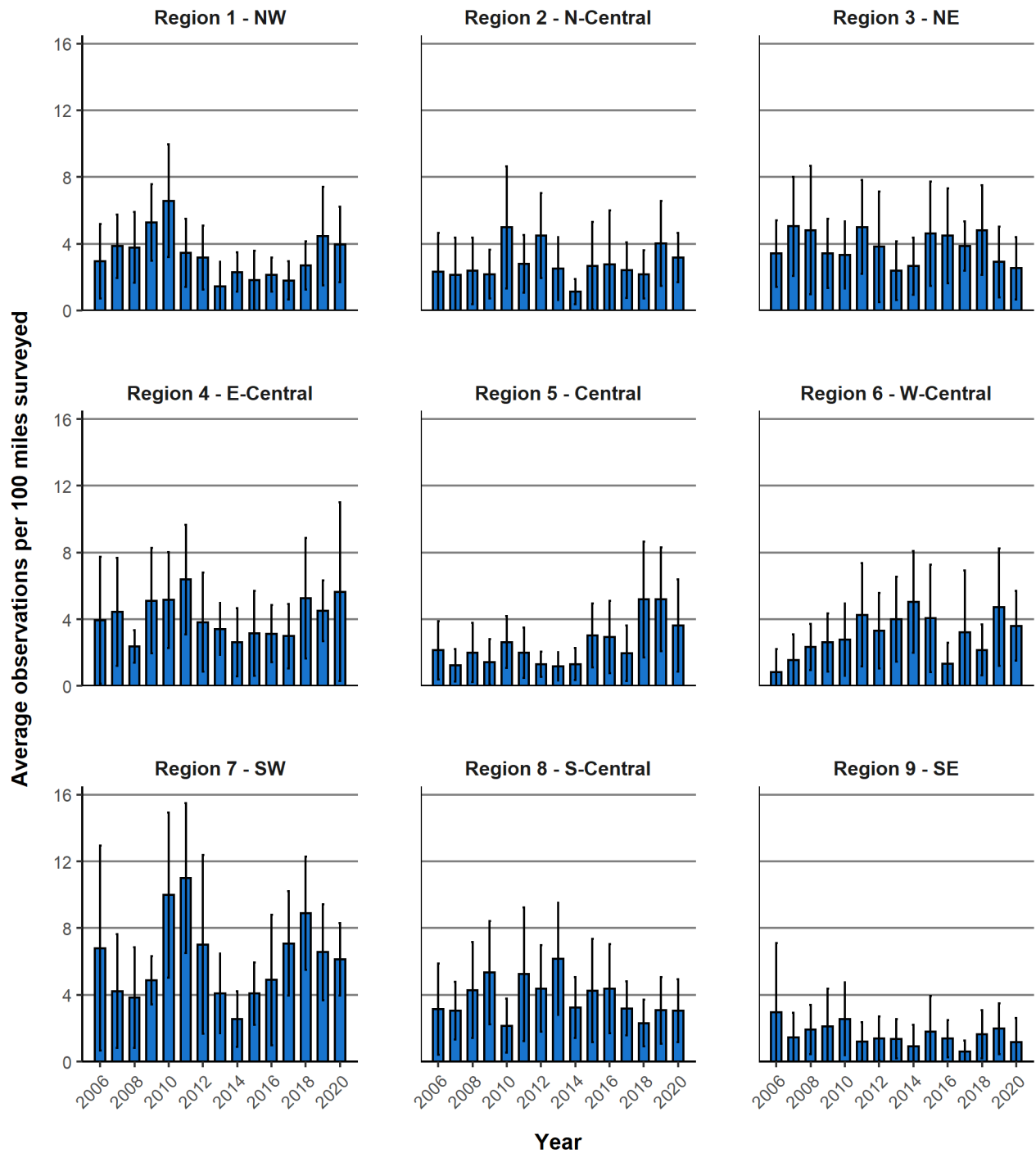


Figure 34. Average skunk observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Skunk includes all observations recorded as “striped skunk” and “skunk” and likely includes none or few spotted skunk observations due to the rarity of the species in the state.

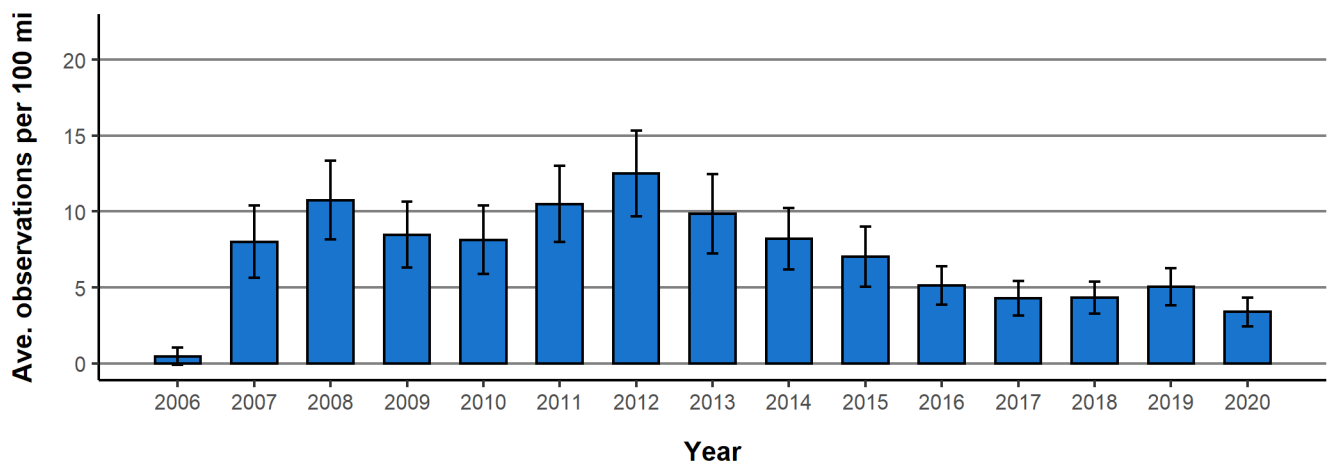


Figure 36. Average free-ranging house cat observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Observations were not recorded in most counties during 2006.

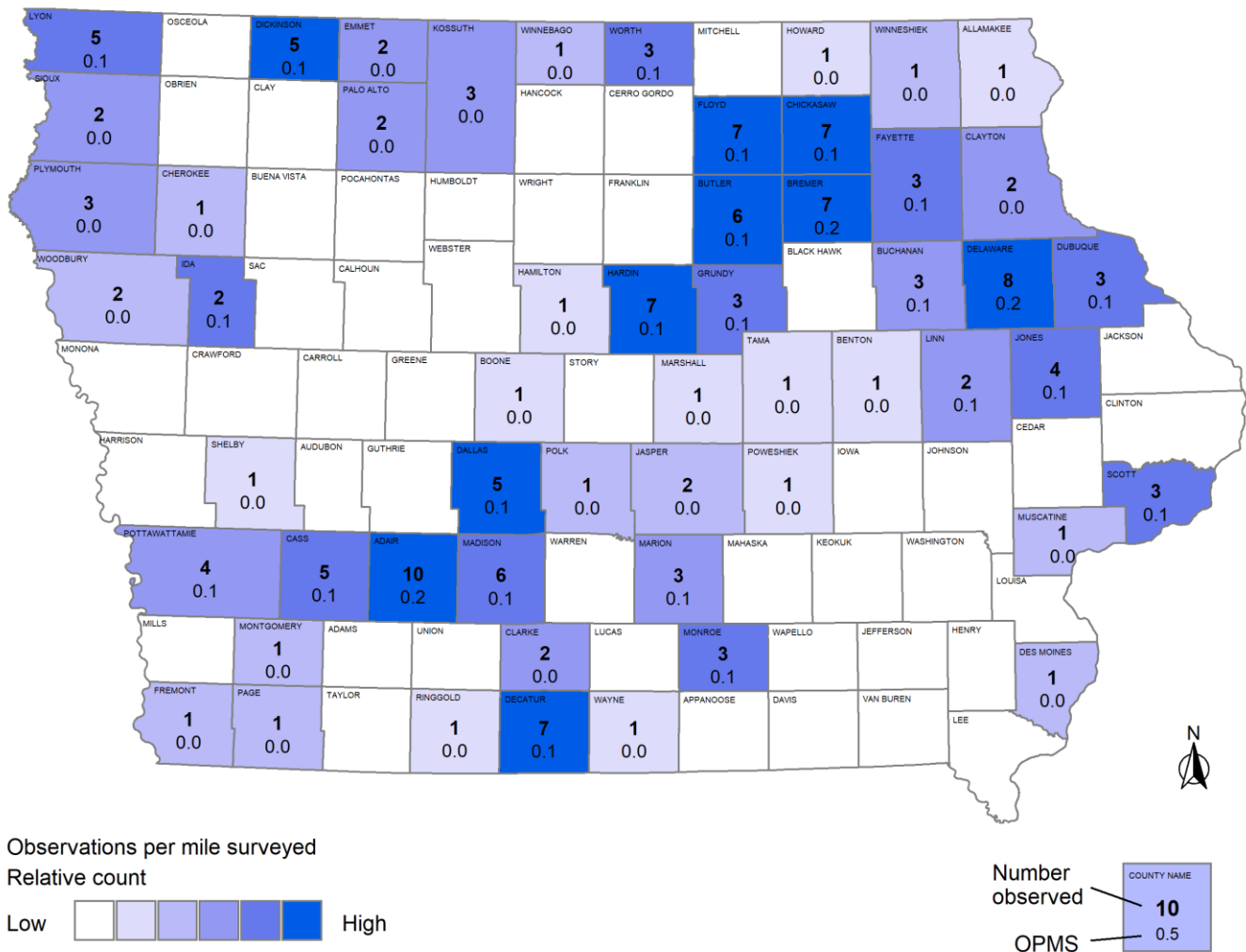


Figure 37. Total number of free-ranging house cat observations per county during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 2020. Cats located at farmsteads not included in counts. Color shading indicates the number counted per mile surveyed (OPMS).

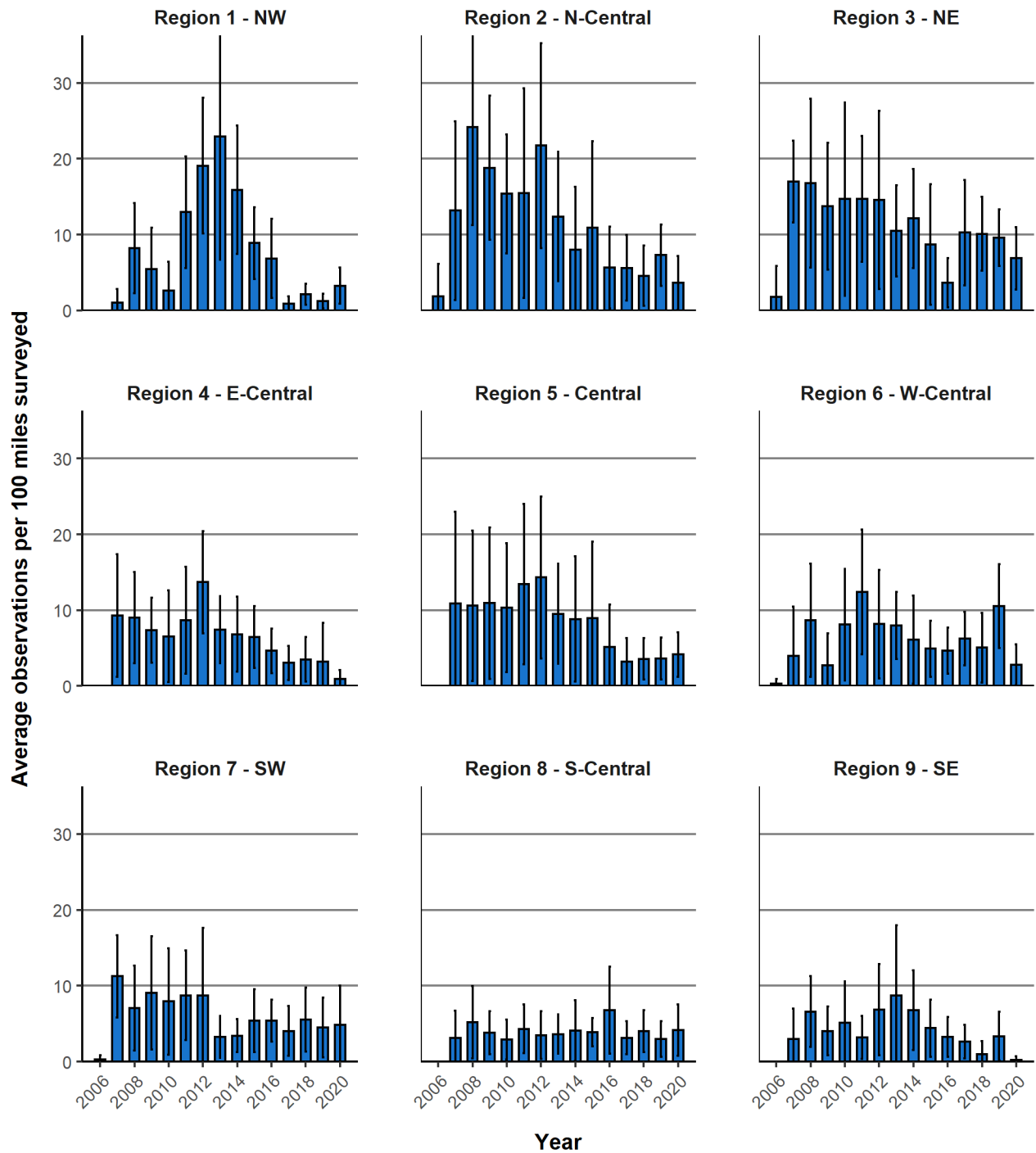
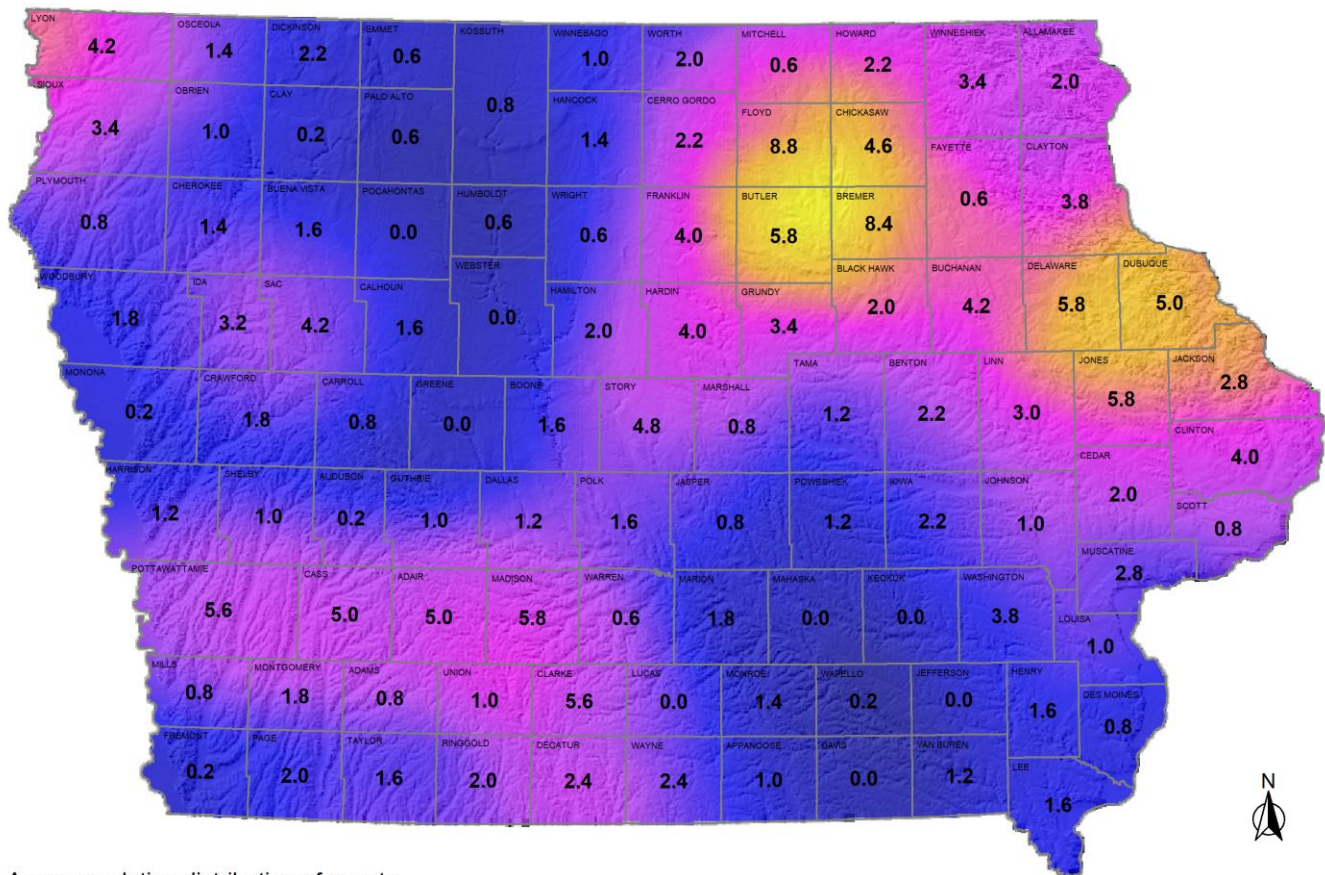


Figure 38. Average free-ranging house cat observations per 100 miles surveyed during the Spring Spotlight Survey for nine regions of Iowa, 2006–2020. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Cats located at farmsteads or human developments were not included in counts. Observations were not recorded in most counties during 2006.



Average relative distribution of counts
5-year average

Low High

Average number observed

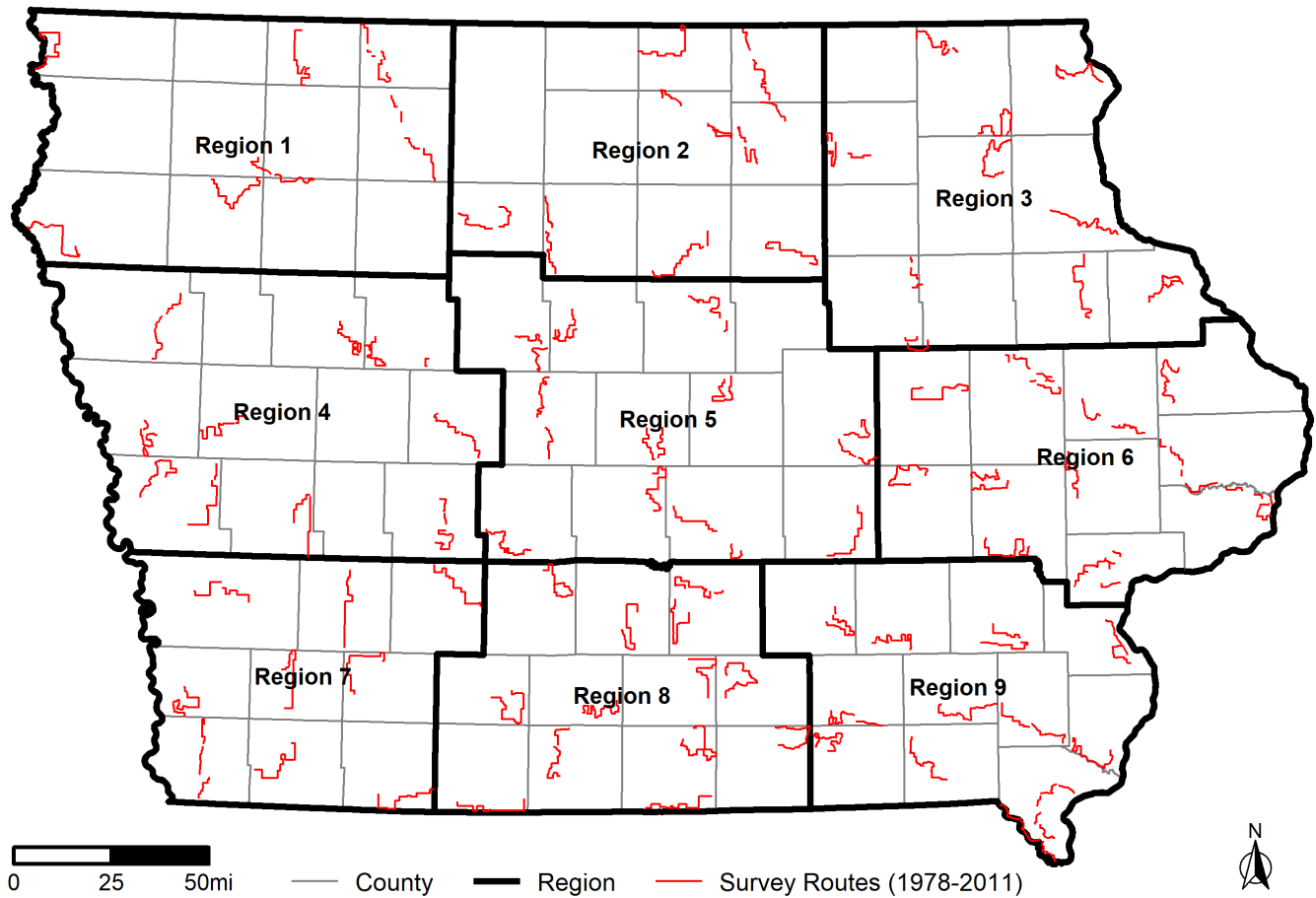
COUNTY NAME
10

Figure 39. Average relative distribution of spring spotlight observations for house cat during the past 5 years in Iowa. The number of observations per county is relative to the highest and lowest number of observations across all counties during the survey and may not represent an over- or under-abundance of the species (i.e., high counts are considered high relative to those observed in all other counties). House cats located at farmsteads or human developments were not included in counts.

APPENDICES

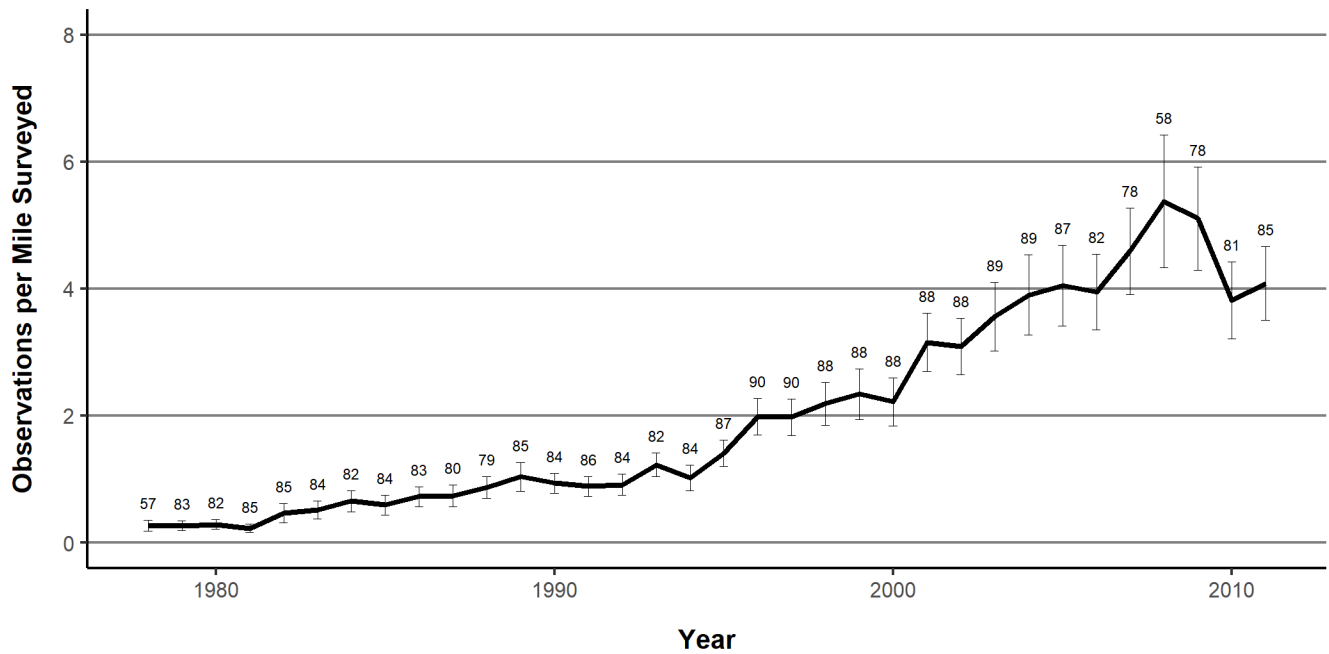
IOWA SPRING SPOTLIGHT SURVEY RESULTS FOR WHITE-TAILED DEER AND NORTHERN RACCOON, 1978–2011

APPENDIX A



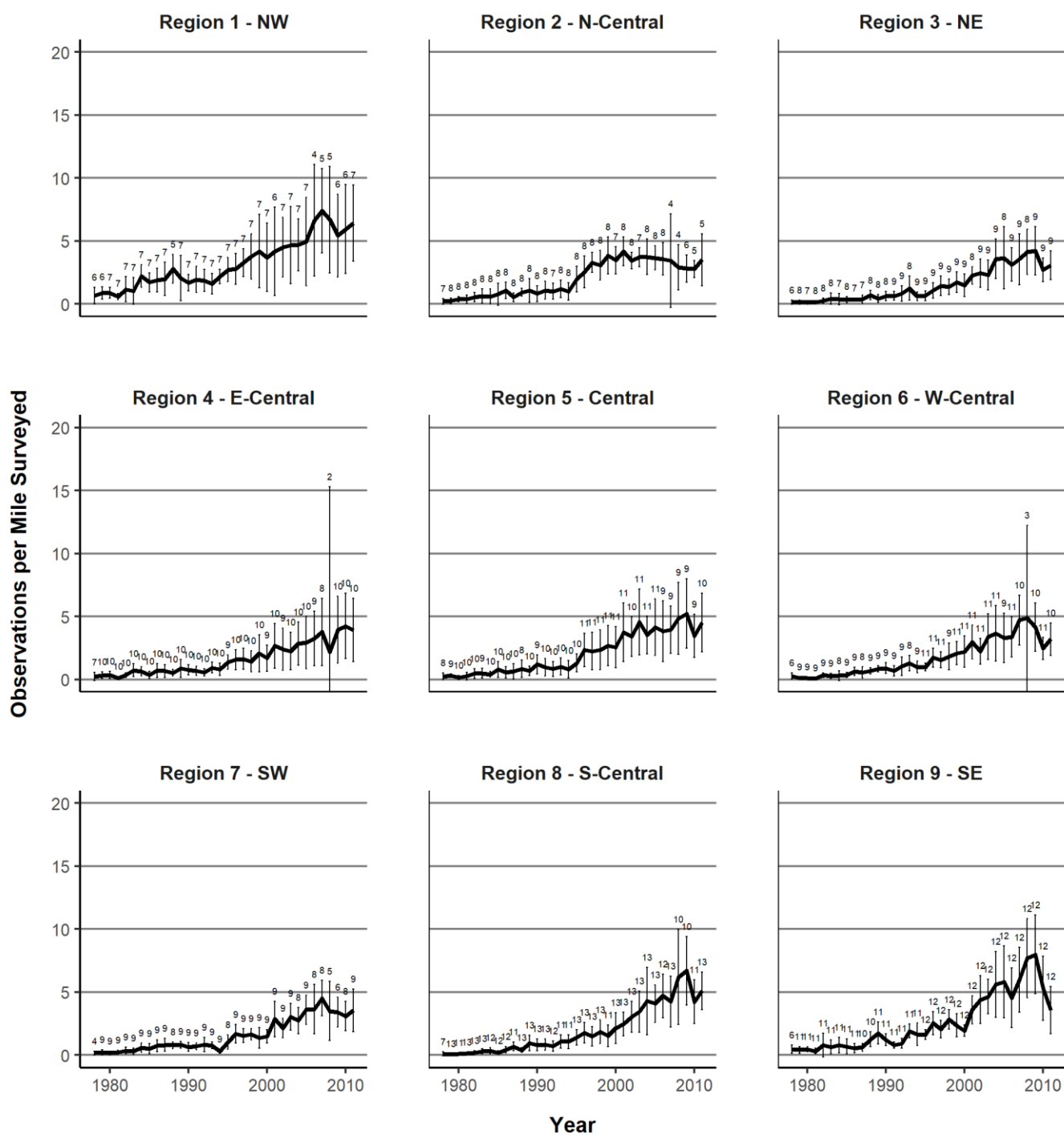
Appendix A. Regions used for summarizing Spring Spotlight Survey observations in Iowa and historical Spring Spotlight Survey routes sampled from 1978–2011.

APPENDIX B



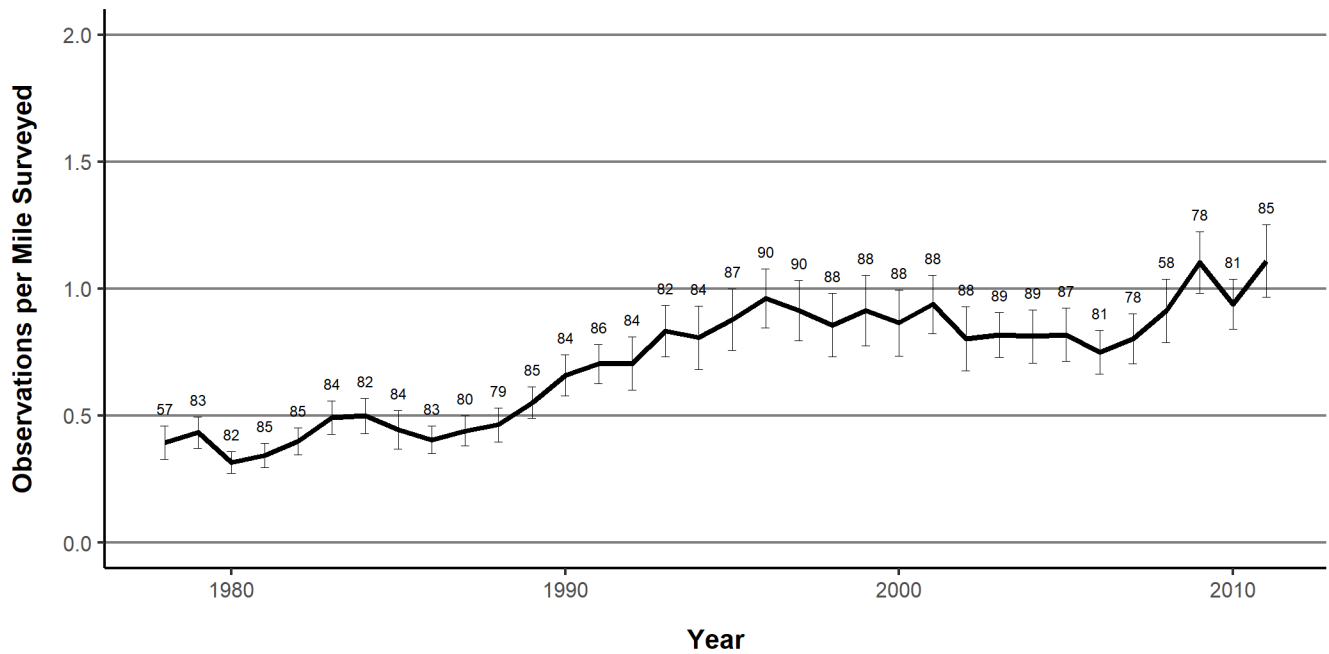
Appendix B. Statewide average white-tailed deer observations per mile surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 1978–2011. Observations were standardized by mile surveyed to account for regions in which counties were not surveyed. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Numbers above error bars indicate the number of transects surveyed each year.

APPENDIX C



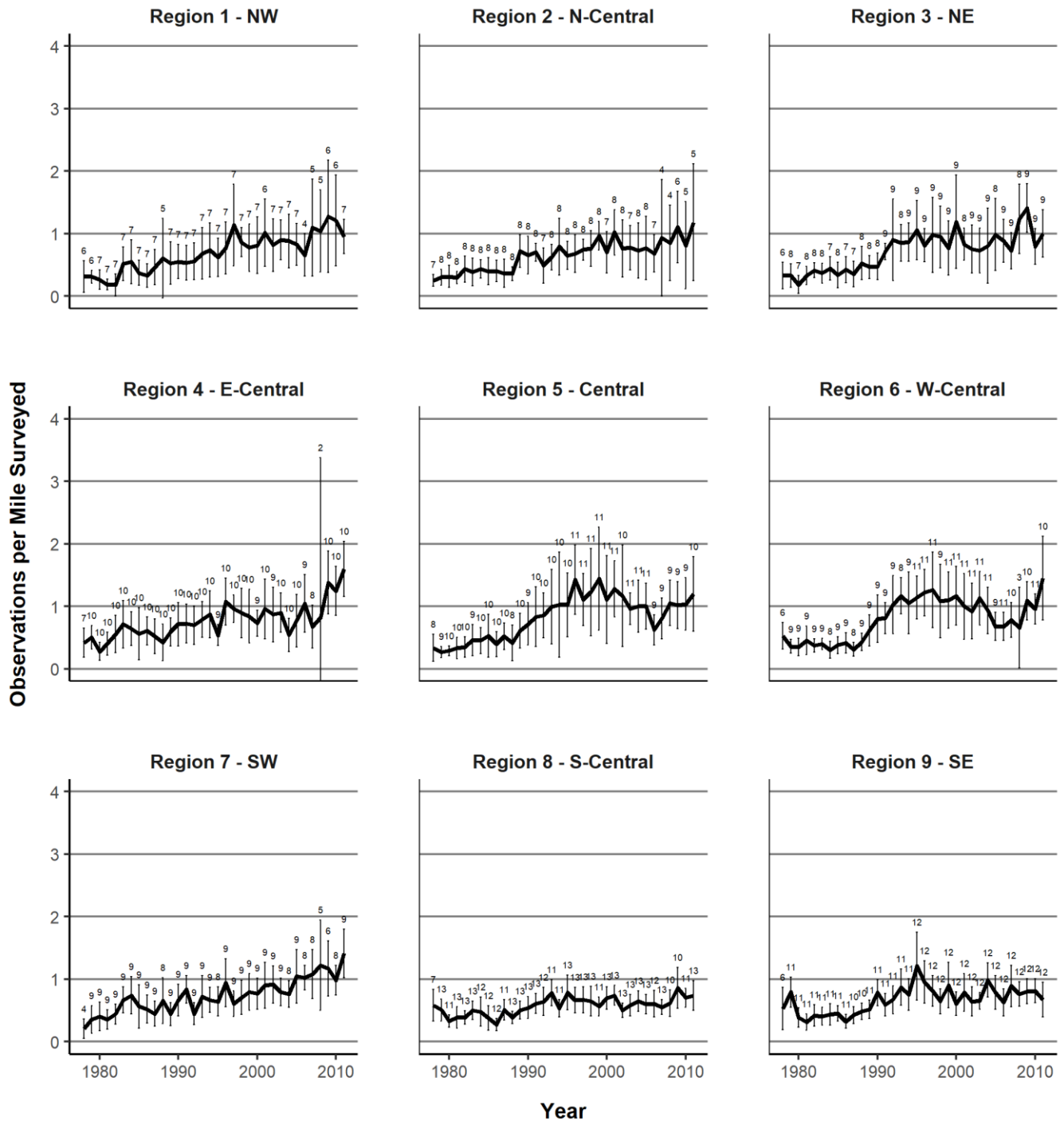
Appendix C. Average white-tailed deer observations per mile surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 1978–2011. Observations were standardized by mile surveyed to account for regions in which counties were not surveyed. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Numbers above error bars indicate the number of transects surveyed each year. Note, surveys were conducted linearly along forested habitats and not standardized by amount of available habitat in each region; thus, cross-regional comparisons should be considered with caution as data represents the relative change in species abundance within each region.

APPENDIX D



Appendix D. Average raccoon observations per mile surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 1978–2011. Observations were standardized by mile surveyed to account for variable number of transects surveyed each year. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Numbers above error bars indicate the number of transects surveyed each year.

APPENDIX E



Appendix E. Average raccoon observations per mile surveyed during the Iowa Spring Spotlight Survey, 1978–2011. Observations were standardized by mile surveyed to account for regions in which counties were not surveyed. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Numbers above error bars indicate the number of transects surveyed each year. Note, surveys were conducted linearly along forested habitats and not standardized by amount of available habitat in each region; thus, cross-regional comparisons should be considered with caution as data represents the relative change in species abundance within each region.